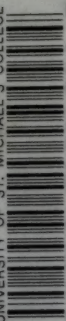
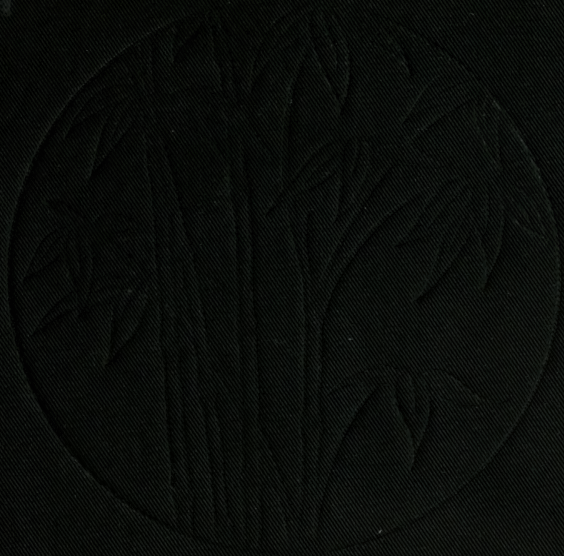


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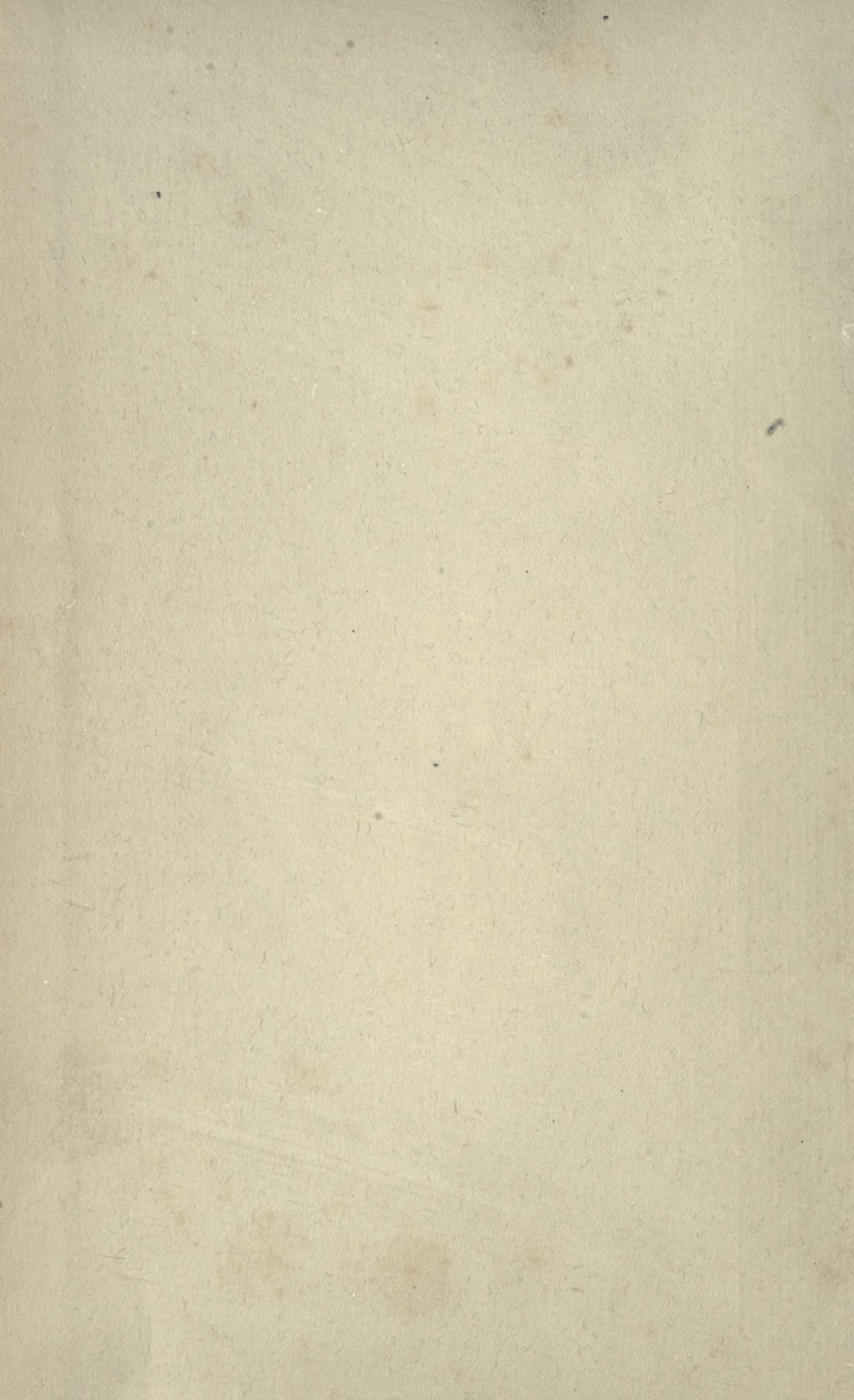
The Little Green Glove and Other Stories



MARY HOSKIN





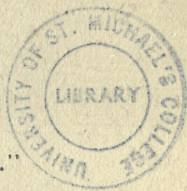


The Little Green Glove and Other Stories

By MARY HOSKIN

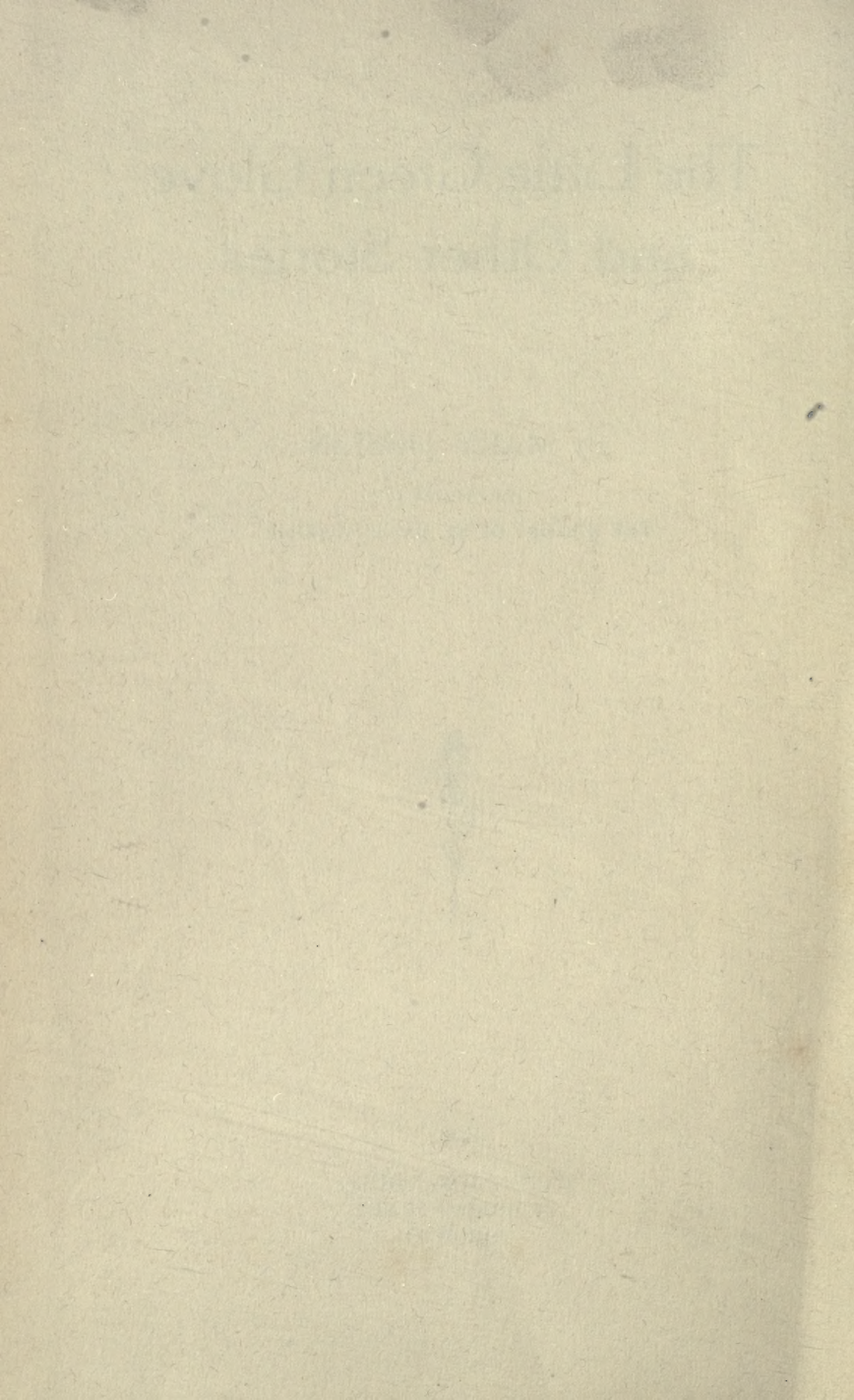
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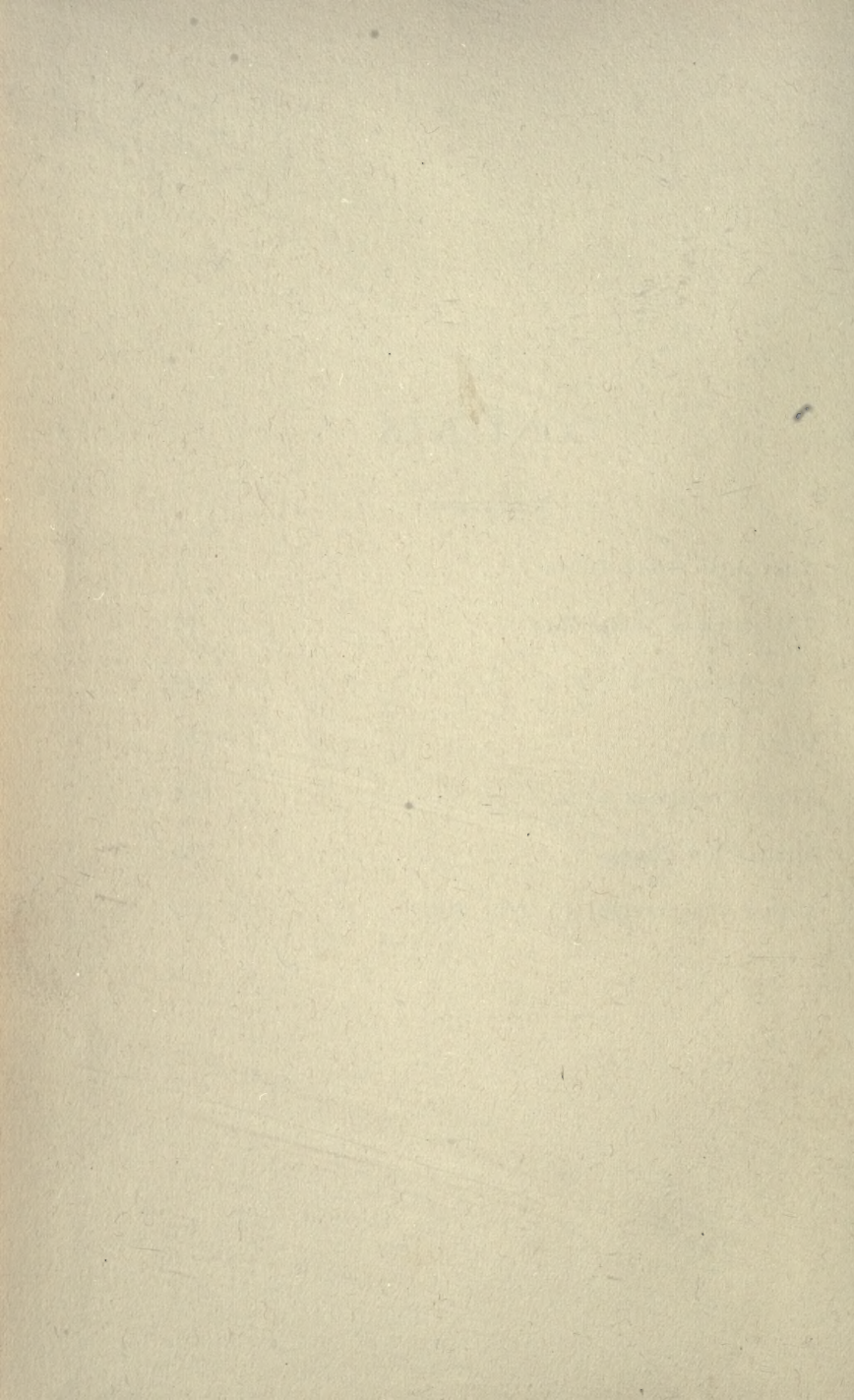
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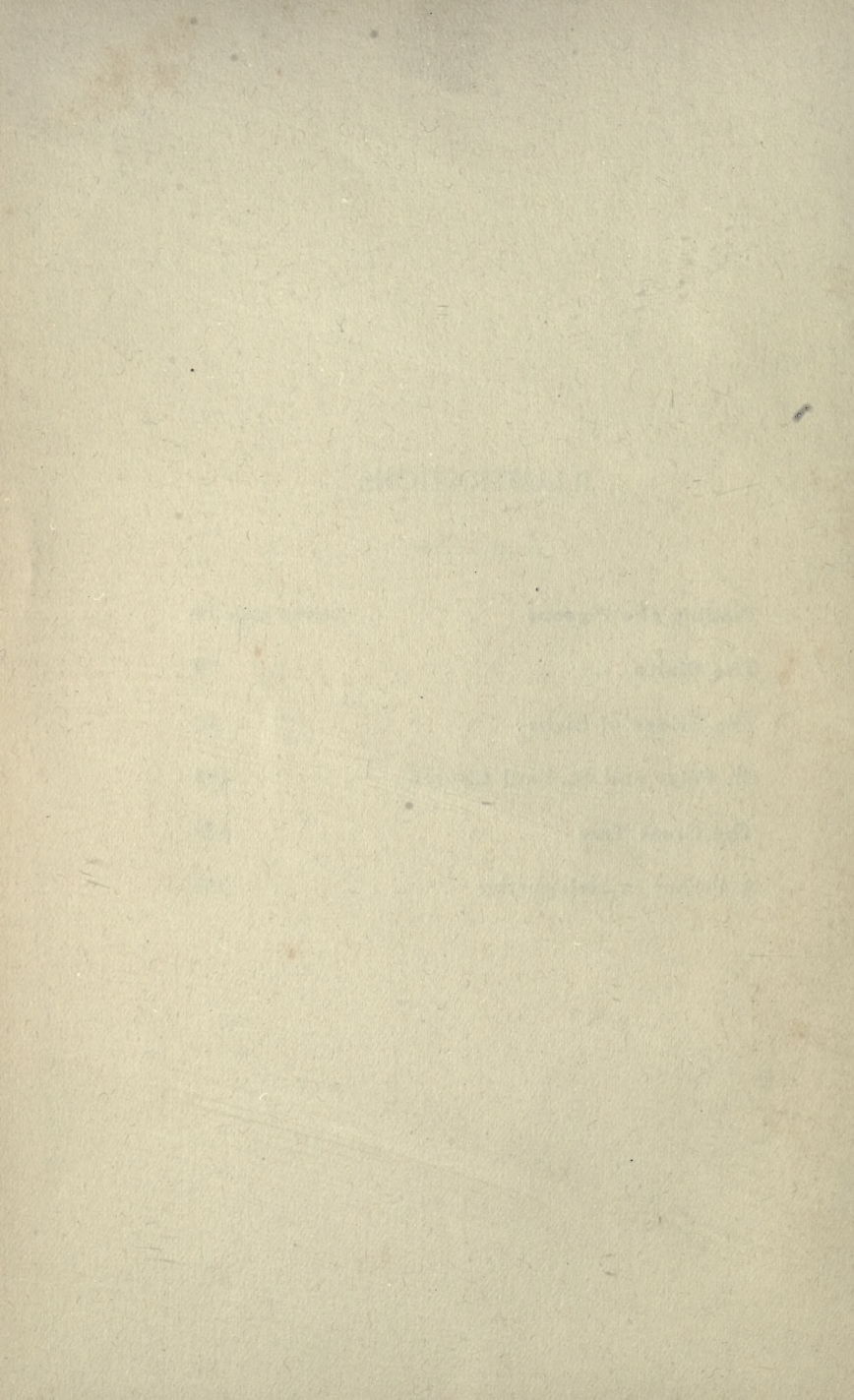
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CHAPTER I.

I am an old bachelor, just past the half-century mark, staid and—shall I say it?—commonplace, no one would connect me with a romance; yet I had one in my day, not so thrilling perhaps as some we read of in story books, but it came nearly wrecking my life, and for a time made all the world bleak and dreary to me. Even now, with my fifty years tinging my hair with silver, the sight of that little green glove to-day, moved me more than I would have expected.

Two much-loved nieces take care of my house and look after their old uncle. My eldest brother died when little Elinor was a year old and her sister Barbara six; his wife lived only one year after her husband, and, as she had no relatives, the care of the two little orphans devolved upon me, the only survivor of our own family.

A settled and decided bachelor, even at the age of thirty-four, I took these little ones to my heart, and for sixteen years they have been the sunshine of my home. My stately Barbara, now twenty-three, is a perfect housekeeper, and my merry, light-hearted Elinor, the joy of my heart.

I am somewhat of a literateur, and while busy in my study this morning, I remembered a book that

I had not seen for a long while, and I wanted to consult it. I could not find this book on any of the shelves or in any corner of my library. I called in Barbara, who told me that she had "long ago" removed a lot of old books and magazines and "things" that seemed to be of no use, to the attic; they were all in a certain box, quite safe; should she go for the book I wanted? No, I would rather go myself and see what she had stowed away.

So I repaired to the attic, and began to turn out the box, which contained many valuable volumes that wise Barbara thought were of no use because they were not perused daily. Near the bottom I came across a shabby little writing case that I remembered I used to carry many years ago when travelling. I sat down on a near-by box to open the case, with a feeling that I was going to find something of more than ordinary interest. As I spread out the case upon my knee there lay revealed to view a little green glove; a tiny little glove, of a fashion of bye-gone days; not one of your three or four-buttoned gloves; not one reaching to the elbow; but a little, one-buttoned glove, that fastened about the wrist.

As I gazed upon this glove, which I had not seen for nearly twenty-five years, I fell into a dream, and in fancy went back to that day, so long ago, when I picked it up from under the rock by the sea-side, where she and I had been sitting, and where I wandered back the next morning to bid a last farewell to the scene. The tide in the meantime had been in and out again, and it was a sorry, draggled little

glove I found partly tucked under a large rock. This was in lovely Ilfracombe, on the north coast of lovely Devonshire, and I have never been there since.

I reviewed the intervening years, and sadly thought—"What might have been." I was then twenty-five years of age, a barrister, as was also my brother, both practising in London. We used to go together for our holiday, sometimes to one or another of the charming spots by the sea in our own country, sometimes to the Continent. That year we decided we would re-visit Venice and return by Switzerland to do a little mountain climbing. Early in May we took up our quarters at the "Grand Hotel," in rooms with little balconies overlooking the Grand Canal. The first week of our stay seems to be blotted out, though I know Jim and I were thoroughly enjoying the "*dolce far niente*" and spending our time lazily between gondola and picture galleries. One evening, when we had been there a week, and felt as though it were time to make a move, we noticed new arrivals in the dining-room at dinner. A lady and her three daughters. After dinner Jim and I went out to the balcony off the dining-room to smoke our cigars. Shortly afterwards the four ladies came out to the Riva where the porter called up a gondola for them. Of course Jim and I went forward to help the ladies embark, and asked them whether this was their first trip on a gondola; the mother, a handsome lady, not by any means old, replied that it was, with the exception of the arrival from the station. The voice, though cultured, show-

ed that they did not hail from England. Jim and I watched them glide down the Canal while we lit fresh cigars. After awhile I said:

"I wonder who they are?"

"Eh," said Jim, starting, "who?"

I often thought during the trip that Jim's mind was far away; he seemed to be thinking of something or someone. I began to suspect that he was in love with a certain little girl we knew in Dorset.

"Why, those ladies to be sure," I replied. "Of whom do you suppose I am speaking?"

"Oh, true; why don't you look in the hotel register if you want to know?"

"I wonder what their nationality is?" I said, "I don't think they are from our sea-girt Isle, but English is their language, and they are people of culture."

After another silence I said: "Jim, did you notice those girls? They are good-looking; one in particular is very pretty."

"I did not notice them particularly," said Jim; "they are ladies, and their mother is a fine woman."

"Oh, Jim!" I exclaimed, "you're a donkey; come, let us get a gondola and go out and hear the music."

"All right," answered Jim. "We had better get overcoats lest it should turn chilly; and I say, Harry, don't fall in love right away."

"Fall in love, indeed," I said, "and why not, pray? I believe you're in love, Jim, old fellow, and I think Dorsetshire would have more charms for you than the Bride of the Adriatic." Jim did not ans-

wer, but went off for his overcoat, while I rushed to the office to inspect the register, and this is what I found,—“Mrs. Benson, the Misses Benson, Toronto, Canada.” So they were Canadians. “It is well,” I thought.

We floated lazily down the Canal towards the music boats, all strung with gaily-coloured Chinese lanterns. The music, though not of the best, was sweet, and the surroundings were enchanting. We did not stop at the music boats, but, as I passed, I saw the gondola with Mrs. Benson and her daughters. We went as far as the Doge’s Palace, smoking in silence, then I said: “Let us turn, Jim, and go back to the music.”

“All right,” said Jim, “I suppose you want to pursue your acquaintance with the newcomers.”

“Yes, I do,” I replied, after telling the gondolier to turn. “I think we might be able to help them to do Venice; we know it so well, and they might be at a loss; it would be great fun to take them about.”

“I don’t see the fun,” replied Jim. “I thought we were leaving Venice in a day or two.”

“Oh, there is no great hurry, is there? for another week,” I asked. “I say, Jim, they are Canadians, and their name is Benson.”

“So you found out, did you, old man? I must say you are very curious; how did you do it?”

“I followed your advice and looked at the register; here we are”; I signed to the gondolier to draw in beside the Benson’s gondola as we threw away our cigars. It was refreshing to watch their delight; how they clapped their hands after each song, and

how they admired the picturesque-looking man who went around with the hat, as he passed with perfect balance from gondola to gondola, stepping on the edge, or end, or over the side without disturbing the equilibrium, as though he had been walking on land. At length I heard Mrs. Benson say:

"It is after ten, girls, and we must return to the hotel; we ought to be all tired after our journey." She signalled to her gondolier, who instantly sprang to the end of his boat as no one but a Venetian gondolier can, and began to back out of the crowd with perfect ease.

I told our gondolier to precede them to the hotel and get us there before them. As we moved off I heard one, who looked like the youngest, say:

"Oh, Mamma, it is perfectly heavenly, the gondola, the gondolier, the music, the Canal, the moon, all Venice; how I love it!" I registered a silent vow that I would try to make them all love Venice.

The Bensons' gondola came in as ours pulled out, and Jim and I helped the ladies to the Riva. We asked them how they enjoyed the evening; they all exclaimed at once: "It was lovely, charming, heavenly, we would like it to go on forever!"

They then bade us good-night. Jim and I went to our rooms and sat far into the night on our own balcony, looking down upon the lovely scene. The moon was at her best, and turned to silver the dome of the Church of the Salute, across the Canal. From our height we could see over the lower houses across the way to the Canal beyond, then another island, beyond that the broad Giudecca Canal, right away

over to Guidecca Island, where the windows of Casa Frolla were lit up. The scene was glorious, the water in the Canals gleamed like burnished silver, while the lights on the islands were reflected like jewels along the edges of the water. Just below us the Grand Canal was alive with swiftly passing gondolas; from some came the sweet sounds of Italian song, from the others the vibrant notes of the violin or the low gentle tinkling of the mandolin, all accompanied by the musical swish of the gondolier's paddle.

I heard another exclamation of delight from the balcony just below us. "Oh, Daisy, did you ever imagine it would be so lovely? It is just like a fairy scene; it seems unreal; I am afraid I shall wake up and find it all a dream."

Here another voice broke in with: "Now, girls, it is time to go to bed; leave some of your emotions for to-morrow; you will be too tired for anything if you stay up longer."

"By Jove, I whispered to Jim, "those are the Bensons in the rooms below us."

"It is time for us to go to bed, too," replied Jim. "Good-night, old man."

CHAPTER II.

The next morning as Jim and I were discussing our coffee and rolls in the dining-room, the Bensons entered and passed our table on the way to their own. They bowed and said "good morning" quite cheerfully. On our way out to the balcony for our morning smoke, we stopped at their table and asked if we could be of any use. "I should be glad," I said, "if we can help you to enjoy Venice; we know it pretty well, and we have nothing in particular to do. Pray make use of us."

Mrs. Benson said: "You are most kind; our stay must be very short, as we are due in England in less than a fortnight. We shall be grateful for your guidance"; while the girls thanked us with charming smiles.

"You will find us just outside the window when you have finished the Continental interpretation of bacon and eggs," I said, "and we can discuss our plans."

"Now, Jim," I exclaimed, while we lit our cigars, "we must remain here for another week; if you are in a hurry to get back to England we can cut out Switzerland; it is not of great importance to go there, and as soon as we reach England you can run down to Dorset and see Kate Howard."

"Well, if I must, I must, I suppose," answered dear old Jim. "But why do you think I want to go to Dorset?"

"Oh, I know very well," I replied, "and I wish you all luck, old man; she is just the girl I would like for you."

Mrs. Benson came out just then, and as we were about to throw away our cigars, she said: "Pray continue to smoke; I am quite used to it"; for which we were truly grateful. The daughters now appeared and Jim made the introduction while I got chairs for all.

"Our name is Yorke; I am Jim, and my brother is Harry; the hotel people can tell you about us, we come here often for a few days' idleness."

"I am Mrs. Benson," said that lady, "my daughters are Teresa, Mary and Daisy." Each smiled her acknowledgment, but my eyes rested longest on Mary.

"We are from Toronto," continued Mrs. Benson; "my husband is a doctor, and we expect him to join us soon in England. Our trip to the Continent this time will be very short. We came over a little in advance of Dr. Benson, intending to spend the time in London until he joins us, but the girls wanted to come to Venice, and here we are."

"We know a young doctor in Toronto," said Jim. "He was in London for four or five years, and only returned to Canada last year. Doctor Reynolds is his name."

"Oh, Doctor Reynolds! We know him very, very well!" they all exclaimed.

"How fortunate," I said. "We are, then, old friends." At which they all laughed, and we felt at ease.

"Now," I said, "what are we going to do first? If your time is limited we must make the best possible use of what you have."

"I should like to go in a gondola," said one. "I want to see St. Mark's and the pigeons," said another.

And Mrs. Benson: "There are some famous pictures in Venice."

"Many," I answered, "Venice is full of them, in churches, galleries and halls."

"What is that church across the Canal?" asked Mary. "Could we not go there and have gondola, church, and pictures all at once?"

"That," answered Jim, "is the Church of Santa Maria della Salute, but I would recommend a visit first to the Cathedral of San Marco, afterwards a stroll about the Piazza, when you can all feed the pigeons; this would occupy the time before lunch, and after lunch we can make a tour of the Grand Canal, calling at the Church of the 'Salute,' and some other points of interest."

"How do we get to St. Mark's?" asked Mary, "do we not take a gondola?"

"Oh, no," I answered, "we go out by the other door of the hotel and walk there; it is not far."

"Walk, in Venice!" exclaimed Daisy, "I thought we could not take a step excepting in a gondola."

"You would not step much in a gondola," remarked Teresa.

"Well, no, of course not," replied Daisy, "but you know what I mean."

"You can have all the walking you wish," I informed her, "you can walk for hours; at every few yards you cross a bridge, for the islands are all connected by bridges, and some of the islands are very small."

"Is there a church near," Mrs. Benson asked, "where we can go to Mass in the morning, and where we can drop in towards evening for our devotions? Some of us like to go, if possible, every day."

"My heart sank a little at this; "they are Roman Catholics," I thought. "I did not expect that; and I was beginning to like them so much."

Jim replied at once: "Yes, there is a church quite near, over the first bridge; we pass it on our way to St. Mark's; but if you will be ready to go out soon we can be at St. Mark's in time for Mass; there is always one there at ten; it is only half-past nine now; we are not Roman Catholics, but we will wait for you."

"That is kind of you," said Mrs. Benson. "Come, then, girls, we must get ready at once."

They went to put on their hats, and I turned to Jim, saying, "Oh, Jim, they are Roman Catholics! Is it not a pity?"

"I don't know that it matters to us," Jim answered, "they are just as nice now as they were before we knew it; and you know, Harry, Kate Howard is a Catholic."

"I know," I said, "and that is the only objection

I see to your marrying her; how are you going to manage about it?"

"I don't know yet that she will have me," said Jim. "If she will, it will be time enough then to see what I shall do."

The ladies here returned and we started on our walk.

We made rather a formidable procession, and I felt somewhat like a guide in a "personally conducted tour," as I brought up the rear with Mrs. Benson. Jim led the way with Teresa, while Mary and Daisy walked next. It was refreshing to hear their frank exclamations of delight over everything.

"Oh, Mary!" cried Daisy, "I am simply enchanted with everything. I could hug you with delight, right here in this wee, quaint, little bit of a street."

"I don't want to be hugged in the street, even if it be only a wee, little bit of a street, just that you may show your delight," Mary replied, "but I agree with you as to the enchantment of the whole place. I thought I should only find the water enjoyable; now I begin to feel the charm of these clean, narrow streets, paved the entire width for walking, where one can zigzag from one side to the other as the shops attract one."

"Here is our first bridge," said Daisy, "what a pretty little bridge! Look up and down the Canal, Mary; isn't it narrow? and see, all the houses are close to the water's edge; oh, there's a church!"

Jim turned to tell Mrs. Benson that this was the church he spoke of, "but we had better not wait to

go in now. You will find it a handsome church, though; there is some beautiful carving behind the high altar."

This church is set in a tiny square facing the bridge, with houses close around it. We skirted the church and soon came out at the lower end of the Piazza, or St. Mark's Square. The four ladies all stopped with a faint exclamation of delight. Three sides of the square are occupied by beautiful shops, a wide, covered arcade forming a protection from sun and rain. On the fourth side of the square, opposite to us, the noble Cathedral of St. Mark, with the graceful Campanile in front, a little to the right, completes the picture. The entire ground of the vast square is covered with broad flags over which the far-famed pigeons roam at will.

"I am simply dumb with admiration," exclaimed Mrs. Benson. Even Daisy was silent.

"I cannot let you linger now," said Jim, "if you would be in time for Mass."

We all moved on, picking our way through the pigeons, which are absolutely without fear, and quite masters of the situation. After leaving the ladies in the church before an altar where Mass was about to begin, saying we would return in about half an hour, Jim and I walked down past the Doge's Palace to the Piazzetta, or Little Square, where we walked up and down by the Grand Canal. When we returned to the church our ladies were already walking about admiring the rich Mosaics with their golden background. We got the Sacristan, who took us into the sanctuary, to show the ladies the

gold altar piece set with jewels, then to the treasury where are some beautiful specimens of the goldsmith's art in chalices, etc., silver altar pieces, croziers, several pieces of rock crystal, a Doge's chair, and St. Mark's chair brought from Constantinople. After walking around the church for a time to admire the beautiful and peculiar architecture, we went out into the Square where they all enjoyed half an hour feeding the pigeons. With little shrieks of delight the girls had them lighting on their shoulders and heads and fighting for a place on outstretched hands and arms. We next paid a visit to the Doge's Palace; there we saw Tintoretto's celebrated picture representing Paradise. It is the largest picture in the world, being twenty-two and one-half yards long and seven and one-half yards high. Tintoretto, who always painted on a large scale, did this picture in 1590, in his seventy-second year.

We then descended to the terrible prisons under the palace, and returning, crossed over the Bridge of Sighs and back, when it was time for lunch.



FEEDING THE PIGEONS, VENICE.



CHAPTER III.

With Mrs. Benson's permission, we got a waiter to give us a larger table that we might form one party. I asked them all whether they were satisfied with their morning and their guides. They all exclaimed at once that it surpassed their expectations.

Mrs. Benson said: "One thing that strikes me is the quiet, the repose of the place. There is no hurry. I should think it would be just the place for people with tired nerves."

"And, Mamma," said Mary, "did you notice the absence of horses? That is what makes it so quiet—no horses, no carriages, nor street railways—all the streets just for pedestrians; it is ideal!"

"I wish," said Daisy, "that papa would come here for his holiday and let us stay here all summer, instead of going to the sea-side in England."

"I don't think you would like that," I said, "it will get pretty warm here in a month; besides I can't allow you to slight England; there are some beautiful places there, and if you want an ideal spot by the sea, I can recommend just the thing."

"My husband wants a long holiday and a quiet one," said Mrs. Benson. "He is coming over with my son and will meet us in London at the end of

May. We shall then go somewhere by the sea, but have not yet determined where."

"Then let me recommend Ilfracombe, on the north coast of Devon," I said, "you will find it quiet and picturesque."

"If you like a rocky, rugged coast," remarked Jim, "you will like Ilfracombe, but if you want stretches of sand and a smooth beach, don't go there."

"There is nothing I like so much as rocks and sea," said Mary, "I am sure we shall be charmed with Ilfracombe."

"I know I shall never like any place again but Venice," said Daisy.

"Oh, Daisy," reproved Teresa, "you are like the little boy who in spring said he wished it were always spring, and in summer wished it were always summer, and so all through the seasons; wait until you see Ilfracombe. I am sure you will be just as enthusiastic."

"How long will you remain in England?" I asked.

"Probably until the end of August," replied Mrs. Benson. "Dr. Reynolds is to look after my husband's practice, and he really needs a long rest; we shall not travel about but spend most of the time by the sea."

I made a rapid calculation of how much time I might be able to spare to run down now and then to visit them.

"Now," said Jim, "I am going to be a tyrant and not give you much time to loiter. Do you think

you can be ready to go out by three o'clock?" he asked Mrs. Benson.

"We are in your hands, and you will find us very obedient and docile."

We had two gondolas; Jim went in one with Mrs. Benson and Teresa, while I had Mary and Daisy. As we pulled out from the hotel Jim called attention to the building adjoining the hotel on the left. "That," he informed our friends, "is Desdemona's Palace; look well at it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Daisy, "is that where Desdemona was smothered? How lovely to see it!"

"Why, Daisy," reproved Mary, "I do believe you are gloating over the horrible death of poor Desdemona."

"Oh, no, Mary, I am not, indeed, but you know well enough what I mean; it is so interesting to see all these places one has read about. I want to see the Rialto, too."

"We pass under the Rialto this afternoon and you shall get off and go over it and all about it," I promised.

"Oh, how perfectly delightful," cried Daisy, clapping her hands, "I didn't half believe that all these places really existed; it is like a fairy story come true."

We were now across the Canal and about to touch the fondamenta in front of the "Salute."

"What are those two old men with the long sticks waiting for," asked Mary.

"They have hooks at the end of their sticks," I replied, "and they catch and hold our gondolas

while we land; they will expect a few 'soldi' for the service; it is a pious fiction that our gondolier could not manage alone."

"But I like this way best," said Mary, as she stepped out of the gondola, "I am sure it keeps one more steady."

"Besides being more picturesque?" I asked.

"Yes," she laughed, glancing at me shyly.

As we ascended the broad steps they all admired the beautiful exterior of the church, which is octagonal in shape. I could write pages descriptive of the wonderful paintings in this church, but there are better descriptions of Venetian art than I could give. Here our friends saw their first Titians and were enraptured. On walls and ceilings, in church, presbytery and sanctuary, Titian everywhere. The most remarkable picture, I think, is the "Outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

In the gondola again, on to the Church of the Jesuits. I waited for the exclamation which I knew would come.

"Why," exclaimed Daisy, "the whole church is draped in lace!"

"Look at the pulpit," said Mary, "there is a lace curtain hanging over it."

"Come a little further in," I advised, "and examine this lace."

"Its marble!" exclaimed Mrs. Benson, "white and gray marble in mosaic. How marvellous."

They admired Titian's "Martyrdom of St. Lawrence" in this church.

As we took our places in the gondola Jim and I



THE RIALTO, VENICE.

consulted, and came to the conclusion that we had better go right on through the Canal to the Rialto, and not try to take in the picture galleries nor the church of the "Frari" that day, as time would not hold out. Our friends admired the palaces and other picturesque buildings on each side as we glided down the Canal. The steps of most palaces come right down to the water from the door, and when the tide is in the water is nearly to the top of the steps.

"Those, I suppose, are Venetian masts," said Mary, pointing to the graceful poles on each side of the steps at all the palaces, "how different to the Venetian Masts we see sometimes decorating the streets; what are they for?"

"Do you observe," I replied, "that there are always two side by side, just far enough apart to admit a gondola? The gondolas are run in there and tied when not in use."

"Oh, yes," said Daisy, "look, there are several gondolas between the masts, and the masts are surmounted by coats of arms."

"Here is the Rialto," I remarked, "if you want to examine it as we approach."

"Is that the famous bridge? It seems to be covered with buildings," said Mary.

We drew in by the steps and disembarked. As we mounted the steps Daisy said dramatically:

"What news on the Rialto?"

"Why did they refer to the Rialto in that way, Mr. Yorke, and why did people 'meet on the Rialto at noon?'"

"I don't know that people always met on the

Rialto at noon, Miss Daisy, but it used to be the most important part of Venice at one time. It was the market place, and what we might call the Exchange, or the Bourse. Here is a very old and dingy church which I think is the oldest in Venice; we must go in there on our way back; there is an old map of ancient Venice there, before the Canals were cut and straightened as they are now."

"How quaint this bridge is," said Mary, "it is like a street with shops on each side. We must buy some souvenirs from the Rialto."

Which they all proceeded to do.

As we took our places once more in the gondolas, I told the gondoliers to return by way of the narrow canals after passing under the Rialto, and go down the Canal between the Doge's Palace and the prisons under the Bridge of Sighs.

"And," I continued, turning to the ladies, "we shall be mortally offended if you say the canals are 'smelly,' or Venice dirty. You must go through the narrow canals, otherwise you will not have seen Venice, and they are very narrow in places, with barely room for two gondolas to pass. They are close, as the houses are for the most part high, and built to the water's edge, with here and there a fondamenta; but remember, the tide comes in twice a day, and the water in the canals is changed; if you see an occasional orange peel or banana skin in the water, it is no worse than you will see any day in the back streets of a city."

"Nor yet so bad," said Mrs. Benson, "for in cities the streets are not flushed twice a day."

Our gondola went first through the Canals, and the other kept at some distance behind. As we entered a very narrow canal another gondola approached towards us.

"Oh, Mr. Yorke!" cried Mary, "do you think there will be a collision? There is surely not room to pass!"

"Don't be afraid," I replied, "a gondola never upsets. No one is ever drowned; there is plenty of room to pass even if they touch. I believe a gondolier could take his craft through a chink."

The girls were enchanted at the musical "coo" the gondoliers give on approaching a cross canal, and which we occasionally heard from around a corner.

"Why do they do that?" asked Daisy.

"To give notice of their approach," I replied, "if two gondolas arrive at a corner simultaneously from opposite directions, they would collide if there were not some signal. If a gondolier hears no reply to his 'coo' he knows the way is clear."

"How still it is and how voices carry on the water," said Mary.

"That is the reason the gondoliers always speak in a low tone," I replied. "Have you remarked it?"

"Yes, I noticed," she replied, "they always seem to be speaking to one confidentially."

"Here we are under the Bridge of Sighs," I said.

"I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;

A palace and a prison on each hand."

quoted Daisy.

"You ought to have said that when you were on the bridge," corrected Mary, "instead of waiting

until we pass under. But is not that a terrible looking prison, and some of the cells are under water. It makes me shudder."

"But look, Mary," broke in Daisy, "how beautiful the palace on this side."

It was not long before we reached the hotel, and separated to prepare for dinner. After dinner we went out again, divided between two gondolas as before. I always contrived to get Mary in my party.

And so this happy day came to an end, and Jim and I were once more having our evening smoke and listening to the merry voices of our new friends as they compared impressions in their balcony below us.

"What do you think of it now, Harry?" asked Jim, "and what are you going to do about it?"

"Do! why, Jim, old man, we must just stay while they are here, and go back to England with them."

"Whew! I believe you are hard hit."

"I don't know, but I don't want to go away just yet."

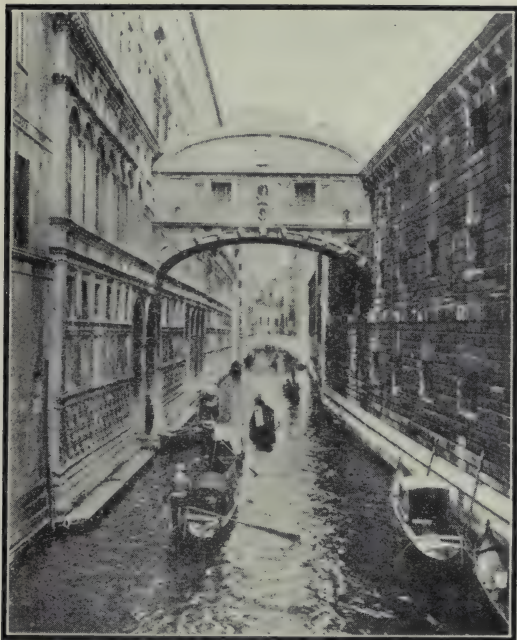
"Which is it?" asked Jim, "the one with the Madonna face, or the merry little one?"

"If it is either, it is Mary, but I am not sure yet; I wish they were not Catholics."

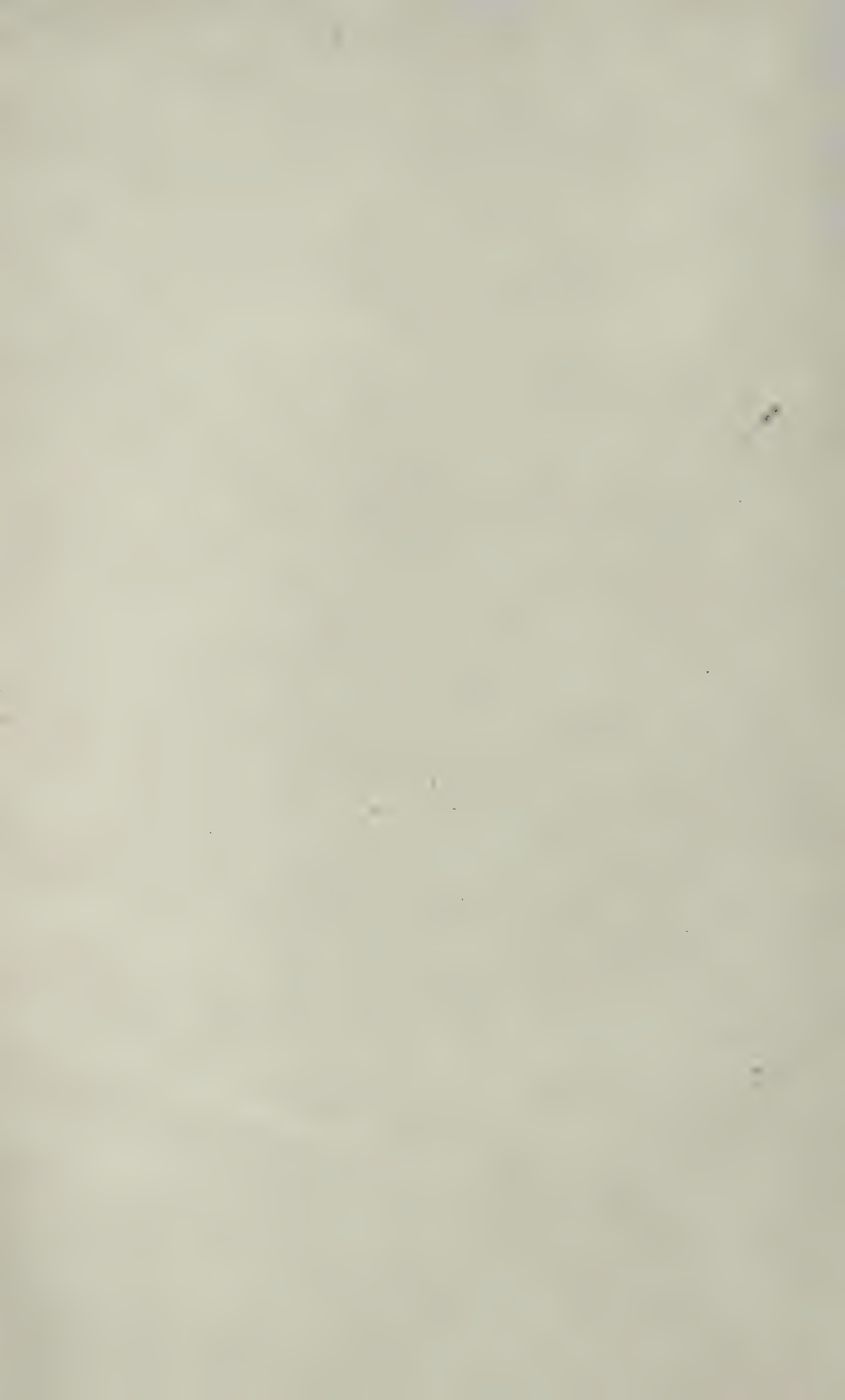
"Does it not occur to you," teased Jim, "that you ought to run from danger? 'Discretion is the better part of valor,' and all that."

"No, I can't go away."

"Then you've got it," said Jim, "and its too late to run. By jove! she's a nice girl, and you will be lucky if you win her. Now let us go to bed."



THE BRIDGE OF SIGHTS, VENICE.



CHAPTER IV.

I have given this first day almost in detail; it was the prelude to six others, each happier than the last. We visited the "Accademia" where they revelled in Titians and Tintoretts. Titian's "Presentation of the Child Mary in the Temple" was of special interest to my Mary, as I learned to call her in my heart. In the church of the "Frari" the beautiful tombs of Canova and Titian are the most striking objects, but wonderful pictures are here, too, and a sculpture by Donatello of "The Baptist."

We went one morning to the Church of S. Rocco where are glorious paintings by Tintoretto, then to the "Scuola of S. Rocco" near-by, where are fifty-seven very large Biblical pictures by Tintoretto, who always painted on a large scale. Each day we spent in visiting church or galleries or the other islands.

We crossed over one day to S. Giorgio, where there is a Benedictine Monastery and a beautiful church with more Tintoretts. The most remarkable feature in this church is the stalls carved entirely by the monks; each panel depicts an event in the life of St. Benedict; they are very high at the back, and along the front, at the dividing line between each stall, stands a beautiful carved figure. These stalls which took twenty men twenty-five years to

carve, are considered the best carving in Italy, and consequently the best in the world.

One day we went to the Island of Moreno to see the wonderful glass works. Our friends were intensely interested in it all from the seething cauldrons of molten glass, to the artistic performance of one of the men, who made them a charming little vase while they watched him. The vase was put in the furnace to be annealed, with a promise to send it to the hotel next day, which was done.

Sunday of this week happened to be the day of the annual Regatta. This would be something worth seeing, I assured the ladies. Jim and I talked over the arrangements and concluded that if Mrs. Benson would permit, we had better all assemble on her balcony at first, as being lower than ours; then, when the procession passed, we would take our two gondolas and hurry by the side canals to the Rialto to see it pass that point.

Immediately after lunch we took our position on Mrs. Benson's balcony. The Canal was alive with gondolas, the air filled with happy voices and merry laughter.

"Why," exclaimed Mary, "it is just like another town, where crowds are waiting for something to pass, only here gondolas fill the sides of the Canals instead of carriages anywhere else."

"I should think these gondolas bumping into each other would surely upset," cried Daisy. "Look how close they are, and the gondoliers standing on the very edge never lose their balance."

"Who are in those gondolas, passing up and down, pushing the others back?" asked Teresa.

"Those are the police," I answered, "they have to keep the Canal clear for the procession."

"Even the police are in gondolas!" exclaimed Daisy.

"Yes," I answered, "and you will see the firemen before the day is over."

"Look at that gondola going down the middle of the course," said Jim. "That is the Chief of Police. He is seeing that everything is in order."

"Oh, look, look, look!" cried Daisy, "that is surely the procession!"

And now appeared, gliding stately by, a long, gorgeous gondola, with trimmings of crimson velvet and cloth of gold, with crimson velvet trailing behind. Eight gondoliers, standing four on each side, wore crimson silk shirts and flowing crimson sashes. The next gondola resembled a dolphin. The sides of the boat were of scales, the prow a dolphin's head, and at the stern curled up a dolphin's tail. The gondoliers' shirts shimmered like fish scales, and their sashes were of sea green silk. Another gondola represented a chariot; high up at the stern was an erection like the body of a coach, in which sat one person holding ribbons which extended from a horse's head at the prow; the gondoliers were in black and gold. And so they passed, gondola after gondola, decked out in mediaeval splendor; it was a gorgeous sight; our ladies were breathless; even Daisy was silent. As the last went by the crowd filled in after them and the Canal was black. We

hurried down to our waiting gondolas; our gondoliers were in immaculate white shirts, with flowing sashes, one of crimson, the other pale blue.

The girls drew back when they saw how crowded the Canal was; they feared an upset.

"There is nothing to fear," said Jim, "it is as safe as a crowd of carriages—safer, in fact, for there are no horses to be frightened."

We hurried to the Rialto, but the procession had already passed under the bridge. However, it was to return that way, so our gondoliers by degrees squirmed the gondolas to the outer edge of the crowd.

"What," asked Mary, "are those two large boats, one on each side of the Canal, with engines?"

"Those are firemen's boats," I replied.

"Do they fear a fire?"

"No, you will see presently."

"Oh," cried Daisy, "what are they doing?"

"They are sending a stream of water across the Canal. Now it forms an arch, coming from both sides. Why do they do that?"

I laughed as I saw some gondolas back away just in time to escape a ducking.

"Don't you see," I explained, "that is a most effective way of keeping the course clear. Those fellows would fill in the Canal and get in the way of the procession."

"I think they are returning," said Mary.

And once more we saw that wonderful and unique procession pass; no where else in the world can such a pageant be produced.

CHAPTER V.

Two days after this we left Venice and by easy stages proceeded to London. Jim went off at once down to Dorsetshire. I divided my time between business and the Bensons until the arrival of Dr. Benson in about a week. I shall refer to only one incident during their London visit. We had been exploring the Tower and were standing at the "Traitors' Gate" when Mary said: "I should like to walk from the Tower to Tyburn."

I winced when she said this, for I knew of what she was thinking. I replied:

"It is too far to walk; it is miles and miles. I will drive you there if you like."

"Oh," said Daisy, "let us go on top of an omnibus, it is such good fun riding on an omnibus."

But I knew Mary did not want to go "for fun."

"It must be for another day," broke in Mrs. Benson, "you have done enough for to-day."

So it was arranged that I should call for them the next day, and take the three girls to Tyburn. We went on the top of an omnibus. "We will get down at Marble Arch," I said. "You will hardly know the place as Tyburn Field, Miss Mary; it is no longer in the country, but is all built up; however, a little

beyond Marble Arch there is a tablet on the fence of Hyde Park, showing where the gate of Tyburn used to be."

We walked a little way along by the fence of Hyde Park past this tablet; Mary seemed pensive, and all were quiet. We turned into the Park at the first gate we came to, and after a little while recovered our spirits.

A day or two after this I saw them off for Ilfracombe. Dr. Benson, and his son, Charlie, had arrived, and wanted to get settled down quietly as soon as possible. I felt very desolate as I returned to my comfortable bachelor quarters which Jim and I shared. I never before thought our cosy rooms lonely and dreary; they had lost their charm. The next morning I had a letter from Jim, telling me of his engagement to Kate Howard. "Dear old Jim," I thought, "I hope he will be as happy as he deserves to be. I wonder how he managed about religion? It is strange we should both fall in love with Catholic girls, for there is no use in mincing matters, I am in love with Mary Benson, more in love than I ever expected to be. This is the first time I have been really hit; and she is a Roman Catholic."

Jim came home in a few days, looking radiant. He told me he had given in to all that Kate's grandmother asked of him, and they were to be married in six months. Kate's parents were both dead. She was an only child and had always lived with her paternal grandmother.

"Oh, Jim, Jim," I replied, "this is a wretched piece of business! Why did we both fall in love

with Catholics? I feel that I can't give in like that, much as I love Mary."

"Then you will never win your Mary; you may be sure of that. She is a sturdy little thing, and would trample on her heart rather than give up the smallest thing her religion requires of her."

"I wonder whether she cares for me?"

"I think," replied Jim, "that it would not be hard to make her care, but be careful, old man; it would not be fair to win her love knowing as you do what would be required of you, unless you are prepared to give in."

"But why should I be required to yield more than she? If she loved me why could we not make equal terms?"

"Because," said Jim, "their religion requires absolute obedience on religious questions, while ours, as you know, leaves us pretty much to ourselves. If a Catholic marries a Protestant a promise is exacted that all children of that union shall be brought up Catholics, and unless you are prepared to promise that, you had better not see Mary Benson again."

"I could not do that. I am willing she should do as she pleased about the girls, but my sons must be Protestants."

Jim made no reply to this. We had to settle down to work for a few weeks, and it was at the end of June before I could take another holiday; then I was off to "Ilfracombe Hotel." I saw Dr. Benson on the hotel promenade and went over to him. He greeted me heartily and told me that they

were all down on the rocks below the "Capstone." I made a little improvement in my toilet and hurried out to find them. It was only five o'clock, and we had two hours to dinner time. I could scarcely refrain from running around the paths of the "Capstone," so eager was I to see Mary. I looked over the parapet and there they were away down among the rocks, the tide being out. All the scene I looked down upon, the rugged sides of the "Capstone," the rocks below, some as big as houses, would in a few hours be filled up level, nearly to the spot where I stood, when the tide came in. That is what makes this coast so dangerous, these huge hidden rocks that are so beautiful when the tide is out. The "Capstone" is a hill, very high and conical-shaped, that stands right out to sea; on the side, towards the town, it is connected with the mainland; a promenade has been made all around it on a level with the mainland, and winding paths lead to the top. Overlooking the sea the promenade is a great height at low tide. There are steps to descend in some parts, but people generally scramble down the rocks, which I now proceeded to do. The Bensons had not seen me; they were all there, a little apart, reading, working, or dreaming. They looked up when they heard someone descending, and there was a general cry, "Mr. Yorke, Mr. Yorke!" as they got on their feet and came to the base of the huge rock to meet me. My eye sought out Mary, and I noticed her vivid color, while she seemed to hang back and was the last to greet me. She soon recovered herself, however, as I looked earnestly, longingly into her face

when I took her hand. She met my gaze calmly, and said coolly enough:

"We are glad to see you, Mr. Yorke."

"It was only fancy," I told myself, as I dropped her hand.

They then all began together to tell me what they had been doing in the few weeks they had been there.

"It is not like other sea-side places," said Teresa. "Here there is something to do, or somewhere to go every day, or we can stay here quietly and bask on the rocks if we don't care for an excursion."

"And what about Miss Daisy?" I asked. "What do you think of Venice now?"

"Oh, Venice will ever be lovely and romantic and all that, but here you see we have these rocks, and those hills, and that expanse of sea; don't you think this is quite the loveliest spot in the world, Mr. Yorke?"

"You little enthusiast," I laughed. "I can scarcely refrain from saying 'I told you so!'"

"Oh! you may say it; the others do often enough, but never mind, I do love Ilfracombe."

"And you are quite right, Miss Daisy; everyone loves Ilfracombe. There is a charm here for those who care for rugged scenery that is hard to be beaten."

"Just look, Mr. Yorke," she replied, "from where we are now at the foot of this glorious rock, old 'Capstone'; we can see the 'Tors' on our left, and 'Hillsborough' on our right, with that dear little 'Lantern Hill' close by, is it not all beautiful?"

“ ‘Lantern Hill,’ anywhere else,” said Charlie, “would be a pretty high hill, but here it seems small.”

“They say,” broke in Mary, “that the light-house on the top which gives it its name, was once a church built by the sailors and dedicated to St. Nicholas.”

“And around the other side of this old hill there is a huge cave where they tell us Mass used to be said in times of persecution,” said Charlie.

“But that cave is filled at high tide,” said Teresa. “I don’t think it can be true.”

“Do you know that from the top of ‘Hillsborough,’ ” I asked, “the sun can be seen both to rise and set?”

“Oh, yes! we heard that!” they all exclaimed.

I had been watching the outer rocks for some time and noticed the water beginning to curl around them, so I said: “We must move from here, the tide is coming and we are right on the bed of the sea. We must get up higher, where we can watch it safely.”

As we began the ascent I wanted to assist Mary, but she avoided me and clung to Teresa. Charlie helped his mother, so Daisy fell to my lot. She did not require much help, springing from rock to rock like a deer.

“How good of you, Mr. Yorke,” she said, “to come to see us; we just wanted you to complete our party. Papa does not ramble with us much. The hotel being right on the sea, he loves the promenade there; but where is your brother?”

“He could not get away just now. I left him at work. Besides, he has an attraction in Dorsetshire when he can take a holiday. He has become engaged to be married since you saw him.”

“How delightful,” exclaimed Daisy. “Mamma,” turning around, “Mr. Yorke’s brother is going to be married.”

“I am very glad to hear it,” answered Mrs. Benson, “you must give him all our congratulations.”

CHAPTER VI.

I spent two weeks at Ilfracombe; we had many walks and drives around the lovely spots there; sometimes Mary was my companion, sometimes Daisy, though we all kept pretty much together.

One day we took the coach to Lynton, a drive of about thirty miles. Dr. and Mrs. Benson did not accompany us. We were the three girls, Charlie and myself. When we arrived at Lynton we scrambled down the mountain to Lynmouth below. Now there is an elevator. Here we engaged two carriages to drive us to "Waters-meet," and joy! I got Mary to myself in my carriage; the other two girls drove with Charlie. It is a beautiful drive along by the river Lynn with the hills at our right. But I was stupid and had little to say, while Mary seemed shy. It was bliss enough for me to drive along at her side, and the distance was all too short. When we arrived at the place where we had to descend to the water's edge, I took Mary's hand to assist her. She seemed constrained and as though she would rather struggle down by herself, but I persisted in helping her. We had to pick our way on stones out to the middle of the turbulent river to see where, a little higher up, the two rivers meet. The others had overtaken us and there was a great deal of shrieking and laugh-

ing as they balanced themselves on the stones. Charlie had two to help. I was rewarded by Mary's delight when we reached mid-stream.

"I did not think it would be so beautiful," she said. "How the waters dash together and fling up the spray as though they were fighting for supremacy."

"Yes, and how peacefully they flow along together afterwards," I replied. "Might not that be an image of life; perhaps two persons have a struggle to come to an understanding, then putting all differences aside, journey through life side by side, peacefully as this river. I would ask nothing better than to glide down the stream of life with one I love, and at the end pass into the Ocean of Eternity, as this river does into the sea beyond."

I sought her eyes, but she averted her face, looking at the meeting of the waters.

She replied: "And there all resemblance would end. This river mingles with the ocean and becomes part of it, is lost in it, no matter how turbulent or how calm it may have been on the way; but with us, when we arrive at eternity, we shall have to answer for our lives, whether or not we have spent them according to God's law. But it is time for us to go, the others have begun to climb the hill. How ridiculous to stand here on slippery, wobbly stones in the middle of a river to moralize!"

On the return drive I had no opportunity to say all that was welling up in my heart, for the driver in front of us could have heard every word; I determined that I must know my fate very soon. We

made no stay in Lynmouth, as it was time to get the coach for the long drive back to Ilfracombe.

That evening after dinner, everyone seemed tired; no one would go beyond the hotel grounds, so I could not detach Mary from the rest.

The next morning a walk up the "Tors" was proposed. All the party went, even Dr. and Mrs. Benson. Mary kept close to her mother and Daisy seemed determined to cling to me.

After lunch a siesta was in order, to rest after the morning walk. I was getting desperate. I smoked cigar after cigar, walking up and down the hotel promenade, or sitting where I could command a view of the entrance. At length, about four o'clock, I was rewarded; Mary came out alone, dressed for a walk. She looked startled when I joined her, and said: "Will you come for a walk with me, Miss Mary?"

"I was going for a visit to the church," she replied. "Have the others not come out yet?"

"No one has appeared since lunch; come for a walk first; you can go to the church afterwards."

"Very well, where shall we go?"

"Down the rocks below the Capstone."

"But that is not a walk!" she objected.

Now, the Capstone is only a stone's throw from the "Ilfracombe Hotel," being in fact the next hill, with Wildersmouth Beach between, a beautiful, pebbly beach, terminating in wild rocks, over which the waves toss with fury at the incoming tide.

But I wanted to go to Capstone. I knew how secluded we would be there, where there are so many nooks among the rocks.

In a few minutes we were scrambling down the face of Capstone. Mary needed little help, as she leaped from point to point. I found a low, flat rock for her to sit upon, with another at the back, against which she could lean. For a few moments neither spoke, but looked out over the sea. Mary had no book nor work, so she pulled off her gloves that she might have something to toy with. I noticed then how small they were, and how delicate and white her hands looked in contrast to the little green gloves. I leaned forward and took one of the gloves. I dared not yet take her hand. I was weak and nervous before this frail little woman, I who could stand up in a crowded court-room and browbeat my opponent.

"Mary," I said, "May I call you Mary? I know nothing of the art of love-making. What I am going to say to you now I have never said to a woman before, so you see I have no experience." I felt this was weak and silly, so I made a plunge. "I love you; will you be my wife?" and I took one of her little hands. "I can provide well for you, and I promise to make your happiness the study of my life."

She did not at once withdraw her hand, and it trembled a little in my grasp, which gave me some hope. She was pale, and her eyes were turned seaward. After a pause she said, as she withdrew her hand, "You are not of my religion, Mr. Yorke."

"But surely, Mary," I pleaded, "you will not let that stand in the way if you can love me. Do you love me?"

"Perhaps you will let our religion stand in the

way," she replied, with eyes still averted; but I could see the lips tremble.

"You have not answered me," I said, leaning forward, and again possessing myself of her hand. "Can you love me just a little?"

"Alas! yes, Harry," she said, turning her face to me, tears in her eyes, and a pitiful quiver on her lips, "I love you, have always loved you, I think, but whether I can be your wife, I don't know. You must see my father and get your answer from him."

"But why can you not promise to marry me, if you love me, as, God knows, I love you; your father is no tyrant; he will not interfere with your happiness. I promise you shall always have perfect freedom to practice your religion."

"There are other things; you must see my father. I would rather not marry a Protestant at all. I have always been against mixed marriages, but I have learned to love you, and if you can arrange with my father, I promise to marry you. As you say, my father is not a tyrant; he loves his children, but he is a good Catholic, and he knows, too, how I would decide in this matter, how any of his children would decide."

"My brother Jim is going to marry a Catholic," I said.

"And she?"

"Oh, she is what you call a good, staunch Catholic; Jim and I look upon some things a little differently," I added blunderingly.

Mary rose now and said: "I will go to church and you will see my father; don't come with me;

if you and my father cannot come to an understanding, don't try to see me again."

I assisted her silently up the hill, and stood watching her as she went towards the church, then I walked all around the Capstone before returning to the hotel. I could not find Dr. Benson before dinner. As we were leaving the dining-room I asked him for a few moments' conversation. He went out with me, and we walked to the "Wildersmouth." We could not go far, as the tide was in, and we stood for a little while watching the waves dashing over the rocks. I broke the silence, saying:

"Dr. Benson, I love your daughter, Mary, and ask you to give her to me."

"Does she return your love?"

"Yes, but she refers me to you for my answer."

"You are not of our faith, my dear lad," the Doctor said, not unkindly. I was silent and he continued: "I am opposed to mixed marriages, and I would rather my daughter had not given her heart to one not of our faith; but I suppose she is not to blame for that; you have been thrown much together and you are one, my dear boy, who would easily attract a girl whom you wished to win. We all like you, and if you were a Catholic I would give you my child with all my heart. Now we must see what we can do. You know that before a Catholic is allowed to marry a Protestant, the latter is expected to make certain promises?"

"My brother is engaged to a Catholic," I said.

"And he has, of course, made all the necessary promises?" queried Mr. Benson.

"He told me he had promised all his fiancée's grandmother had asked of him."

"Then you will be prepared to do the same, no doubt. First, you would be required to promise that my daughter should have full liberty and freedom in the practice of her religion, that she should never be interfered with."

"I promise that willingly."

"And all your children must be baptized as Catholics and brought up in the Catholic faith, even if your wife dies before you, while they are minors."

"That is more than I can promise; I am willing to meet you half way, and permit my wife to bring up her daughters as she chooses, but my sons must be Protestants."

"Then there is no more to be said; there can be no compromise."

"But, sir, is it not fair after all that I should have half? You ask too much!"

"You forget, my dear young man, that the proposals are from you. We are surely entitled to make stipulations."

"Your daughter loves me, and I love her very dearly indeed. I would devote my life to her happiness."

"She would never be happy if she violated her conscience. I know my Mary well. Granted that she loves you; I do not doubt it, and I am sorry for it, my poor little Mary. I wish she could have been spared this sorrow, for she will grieve, I know; but she would not marry you under these conditions if her love were ten times as great. Did she not tell you something of the kind?"

"She referred me to you, sir, and she said if I could not make arrangements with you, I was not to see her again; that she would abide by your decision."

"I was sure of it; my dear little girl; she will be brave, I know! Now, Mr. Yorke, there remains nothing more to be said. We must leave this spot, as the water has crept up within a few inches of our feet while we have been talking."

I raised my hat and turned away. I strode off towards "Hillsborough" and was half way up the hill before I slackened my pace. This, then, I mused, was the end of it all; why must religion come between us? Why could they not meet me half way? They were unreasonable; poor little Mary; it would have been better if I had not won her love, even though I must love her always; and I was not to see her again. Ah! well, it was better so. I would return now to the hotel and settle my bill and pack up, for I must leave for London by the eight o'clock train the next morning. Dr. and Mrs. Benson were walking up and down when I returned. I went over to them to say good-bye. They both shook me kindly by the hand. I thought there were traces of tears in Mrs. Benson's eyes as she said:

"Charlie and the girls are over there," pointing to the other end; "you must say good-bye to them."

My heart gave a big bound as I advanced toward the group, but Mary was not with them. I shook hands with them all. They were very subdued. Daisy said, "We shall miss you very much,

Mr. Yorke; I wish there were no such thing as parting."

Charlie said he would go to the station with me in the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning I rose very early, as I wanted to go down to the face of the "Capstone" before the morning tide came in, to take a farewell of the spot where I had spent so many happy hours, and which was hallowed by my last meeting with my beloved Mary. I sat upon the same rock where Mary had sat and pictured her to myself as she was then. I reviewed in my mind all we had said, also my conversation with Dr. Benson. I asked myself whether I could have done otherwise, and I said, no. There are some principles, I told myself, a man can't give up. My heart was breaking with love for Mary, but just as she could not give in, neither could I give in. As I rose to leave I looked all around the loved spot, and was turning away when my eye fell upon something caught in a spar of the rock; as I looked I saw it was Mary's glove. I picked it up; it was no doubt the one I had taken from her hand and afterwards dropped. I put away the treasure, my only souvenir.

I returned to London and plunged into hard work. Jim, I knew, thought I had been foolish, though he said little, and, dear old fellow, he tried not to be too radiantly happy in my presence. He was married the following January and brought his bride to a beautiful little house he had prepared for her

at Lancaster Gate. I remained alone in our bachelor quarters. I went often to Jim's to dinner or to spend the evening, two or three times a week, in fact. Kate was a sweet woman, and she and Jim were devoted to one another. I often asked myself why I could not have done as Jim did. But no, I felt I could not.

To my great disgust the following May Jim became a Catholic. When he told me of the step he contemplated, he looked so happy I had not the heart to reproach him. "I wish, Harry, old man, you could see things as I do; you would be very happy."

"Don't speak of it, Jim," I replied, "you know I never could."

A month or two after this I had a letter from Dr. Reynolds of Toronto, in which he told me of the marriage of Miss M. Benson to a young Dr. Walters, a Catholic.

"She did not take long to console herself," I thought. "It is better so; she could not have cared for me at all." I showed the letter to Jim, who said:

"You ought to be glad that she is not wasting her life pining for you, that would have been foolish. Now, old man, you had better go and do likewise." I shook my head at this. About this time I put away the little green glove; I could not make up my mind to destroy it.

Time slipped by. I saw a great deal of Jim in his home life, and learned more and more to admire the gentle piety of his wife; Jim, too, seemed different; he had such a happy, contented look, and spoke

with such reverence of sacred things; I felt that his religion was very real to him. About a year after this little Barbara was born. Jim was wild with delight; I rejoiced too, over my little niece, but I could not be godfather because I was not a Catholic; this put me out of the circle altogether and set me thinking. Why not look into this religion and see what are its claims? This is not going to be a controversy. I shall not give my reasons for becoming a Catholic; suffice it to say that after a few visits to the Fathers of the Oratory I determined to become a Catholic, and after about six months' instruction I was admitted to the True Fold.

Imagine the delight of Kate and Jim, who were the witnesses of my conditional baptism.

"We are united once more, dear Harry," said Jim, grasping my hand.

"My dear, dear brother!" was Kate's greeting, as she gave me a sisterly kiss.

My own joy was deep, but there was under my happiness the sad, sad question, why did I not seek out the truth before? Mary is lost to me. I threw away my own happiness, and now only two and one-half years after, I have the same faith. I felt I could never love another, and devoted myself to Jim and his little family.

Elinor is my god-child.



THE
LITTLE GREEN GLOVE

PART II.



CHAPTER I.

I was several days, writing a little now and then, in jotting down the foregoing reminiscences, during which time I seemed to live in the past. My two nieces noticed that I was not in my usual spirits and they feared I was ill. They conspired together to coax me to go away for a holiday, and, of course, take them. One morning after breakfast Elinor came and sat on a low seat near me and said: "Uncle, darling, why can't we all go away for a change? I am sure Barbara and I need it badly!" I pinched her ear and said: "Where do you want to go, little one? How great a change does your health demand?"

Here Barbara broke in, "Oh, Uncle Harry, we have the greatest favour to ask of you. We have been north and south, to the lakes and the mountains, but we have never been through Devonshire and Cornwall, which we hear are so lovely?"

"We want some Devonshire cream," broke in Elinor.

"Do take us to Devonshire, Uncle, dear," they both pleaded.

I reflected for a little while, and thought I would like to see Ilfracombe again; my heart had been strangely stirred while reviewing the history of that

two months of long ago, which had affected my whole life.

"How would you like to go to Ilfracombe?" I asked.

"The very place," said Barbara. "I have heard so much of the beauty of the coast there."

"And I, too," chimed in Elinor, "there are lovely walks and drives all about there, and Devonshire cream."

"How soon can you be ready?"

"As soon as you say," answered Barbara, while Elinor clapped her hands.

"This is the fifteenth day of May. I think I can be ready about the first of June; can you?"

"Yes, yes!" both cried.

"In a fortnight, then, let it be, we shall go to Ilfracombe for a good long stay."

"You dear, darling Uncle!" said Elinor, and both began to hug me, till I feared they would strangle me.

"Now, children, let me go. I have some work to do in my study." And I broke away from them; in truth I wanted to be alone; the thought of visiting Ilfracombe again set my pulses beating. Is it possible, I thought, that it is twenty-five years since I was there; it seems to me to be only yesterday. I feel as though I were going to see Mary. What an old fool I am! Mary has been married these twenty-four years and I am an old man; yes, Harry, my lad, you are an old man; you are fifty. "Fifty is not so very old," I answered myself, "and I don't feel old, and I am sure if I were to meet Mary—Whew!

when I think of it, Mary must be, say it softly, she must be forty-six. I never thought of that. I always pictured her as a young girl of twenty-one in those pretty white dresses she used to wear. But in this twentieth century the women never seem to grow old as they used to do; I know several who are, I know for certain, fifty and upwards, and they seem as youthful as their daughters. I wonder whether I look like an old fogey?" Here I pulled myself up. "What rubbish are you thinking about, Harry Yorke?"

On Monday, the second of June, my two nieces and myself left our pretty home in Lancaster Gate to the care of our servants, and before evening, arrived in Ilfracombe. How like, yet how unlike, that day at the end of June, twenty-five years ago, when I stepped off the train, with beating heart, knowing that I would soon see the girl I loved. Now it is an elderly gentleman, who has his two nieces and all their luggage to look after, and who moves a little more heavily, and who has no hopes, but perhaps a little fear that he is going to awaken painful recollections.

"I was abundantly rewarded, however, as we drove around the bend of the road into the "Ilfracombe Hotel," by the cries of delight from my two dear girls when the beauty of the "Capstone" and "Wildersmouth" was first revealed to them. "How foolish," I thought, "never to have brought them here before."

I registered and took two rooms, a large one for the girls facing the sea, and a smaller one for my-

self, looking out on the "Capstone."

"Are you too tired to come out," I asked, "it is only five o'clock; we could enjoy the view from the "Capstone" and have a little walk before dinner." They declared themselves not in the least tired, and after a cup of tea would be ready for anything. I ordered that refreshment for us all, then eagerly set out for the "Capstone"; I felt as though twenty-five years had rolled off and that it was but yesterday since I walked over the same ground. I found great improvements, the hotel and grounds are greatly improved, the promenade around the "Capstone" is wider and more level, with here and there shelters like little bowers tucked under overhanging rocks, and benches in plenty. It was with a feeling of indescribable agitation that I approached the parapet where I had stood twenty-five years before looking upon the rocks below. I had not the courage just at first to look down; instead I raised my eyes to the peak of old "Capstone." It was the expression of delight from the girls that made me turn. "Oh, Uncle Harry, I never dreamed it was so lovely as this; look, there are steps in the rocks, and we can easily get down; do come just as far as that charming nook where there is a bench; we can sit there and take in all this beauty."

I turned as Barbara spoke and saw great improvements there too, for, without marring the wild beauty of the face of this huge rock, a few steps had been cut here and there to facilitate the descent, and wherever there was a level space that would hold a bench, one had been securely fastened. The

one referred to by Barbara was only about ten feet below the parapet, and thither we descended; Barbara and I occupied the bench, while Elinor elected to sit upon a flat ledge of rock. As we sat there, silently enjoying the beauty of the spot, I let my eyes roam about in search of the rock far below around which so many bitter-sweet memories clung. I started, and my heart seemed to stand still. Surely I was dreaming, or had I gone back twenty-five years? There stood a handsome lady apparently a little over forty, looking out to sea, while two young girls about the ages of my nieces, were reading nearby. It might have been, I thought, Mrs. Benson and two of her daughters, Teresa and Mary, or, Mary and Daisy. But no, I roused myself and glanced at my own two girls; it could not be, of course; Mrs. Benson would be quite an old lady now. The girls, absorbed in the scene, had not observed my agitation. When I looked again the older lady was speaking to the others, and they all moved off to the right, and mounting the flight of steps, disappeared around the other side of the Capstone. I noticed that the tide was coming in. Where we were we could safely stay to watch it until it was time to go to the hotel to prepare for dinner. In the dining-room I looked eagerly for the ladies I had seen on the shore, but they did not appear. After dinner I scanned the register, but that told me nothing. I took the girls out to Wildersmouth to watch the waves break over the rocks, sending the spray mountains high. We retired that night without my catching another glimpse of the group that had so interested me.

CHAPTER II.

I was up betimes the next morning and down over the Capstone before the tide came in, to find Mary's favorite seat. I had no difficulty in recognizing it, though it was somewhat rounded off by the action of the waves in all these years. Here was the very spot where I found that little glove. I sat down and regretfully went over my last conversation with my beloved Mary; beloved yet, in spite of the flight of time. The incoming tide, gently touching my foot, reminded me that it was time for breakfast. When I reached the hotel I found that the girls had just returned from Mass.

"You ought to have gone with us, uncle," said Elinor; "there is the sweetest little church just around behind the hill this hotel stands on; it is nestled cosily in a corner where the hill turns."

"I saw some ladies at Mass," said Barbara, "whom I noticed on the sea-shore yesterday while we were on that bench, but I have not seen them in the hotel."

"I wish we could know them, Uncle Harry," said Elinor, "there are two pretty young girls. I wonder who they are?"

"Perhaps we may come across them," I answered, while my fifty-year-old heart beat foolishly. "There

are not many people here yet, and we are certain to meet them," I continued to myself, "so they are Catholics."

After breakfast we walked up the "Tors," passing the little church on the way, where I paid a short visit. I found many improvements on the "Tors," beautiful winding paths made the ascent much easier, without spoiling the picturesque charm; benches, too, much to my gratification, are placed in pretty shady nooks where one may rest on the way up. The view from the top of the Tors is glorious, and quite repays the climb. The girls were enchanted.

"Would you have the nerve to drive over the Tors road on the top of one of those big coaches we saw, with four horses?" I asked.

"Certainly, Uncle," both exclaimed; "we would love to. Where would it take us?"

"It's a beautiful drive to Lee," I answered, "and not very far. But you would have to promise not to scream as we go down a sharp incline overhanging the sea, when it looks as though we must go over."

"We would never disgrace you and ourselves by screaming," said Barbara; "besides, I don't think we shall even be frightened."

"Then we shall go to-morrow after lunch, and have tea there. It's only a little village, but I know we can get tea."

"And Devonshire cream," added Elinor.

"Yes, Devonshire cream and honey to your hearts' content."

After lunch I took the girls up into the town, which had grown to be a smart, thriving place since

I was here last. On our way up the hill leading to the town we passed a fascinating shop of curios, and the girls must needs stop. Elinor took a fancy to an antique table, about which the presiding genius, Mr. Murphy, told her some wonderful tale, while his large, handsome wife was eloquent over a piece of brass that looked to me like a pail, but Barbara said she must have it, so table and pail were ordered to be sent to Lancaster Gate. There were many things to interest the girls in the shop windows; when we came to the lending library I told them they could come here for books when they wanted to read. They would not go in then, so we continued our walk to "Hillsborough."

At breakfast the next morning Elinor demanded some Devonshire cream. "I have not tasted it yet," she said. "I thought I would live on it here."

So we all had some with honey; bread and cream and honey! Surely a food fit for the gods; it can be compared to nothing else; and here where we get it in all its fresh richness, it is quite a different thing to the weak imitation we sometimes have in London. Elinor declared she would eat nothing else during her stay in Devonshire.

The girls went off to get some books from the library, and I told them they would find me below the Capstone on their return, as far down as I could get. I thought the tide would be receding.

I had enjoyed a pleasant hour with my cigars and some newspapers when I heard the merry voices of my dear girls as they scrambled down the hill to join me.

"Oh, Uncle Harry," they both began at once, all out of breath, "we have such news, such news, you would never guess." They flung themselves down beside me, and Elinor said: "Those pretty girls were at the library."

"And their mother," chimed in Barbara. "And they spoke to us," said Elinor.

I felt my heart stand still. I don't know how I managed to control my voice to say steadily: "Don't you think you had better speak one at a time, if you expect me to understand you? Barbara, you are the elder and must be spokeswoman. Now, then, begin."

"Well, Uncle, they were there before us. Elinor and I had just given in our names and paid our fees, when we turned to the bookcases; one of them was standing at the end we were, the other farther down, the mother at the other side of the room. The girl near us smiled and asked if she could help us find the authors we wanted; we said we would like some of Marion Crawford's books. 'They are farther down this side,' she said, 'we often come here, so we know pretty well where all the books are; is this your first visit?' We told her we had never been in Ilfracombe before. 'Oh, indeed!' she said, 'we have been here often; our mother was here as a girl and she always raves about the place.' We had now joined her sister, who also spoke to us, so I got up courage to ask their name. 'Walters,' said the eldest, 'I am Mary, and my sister is Daisy; we are Canadians.'"

"And you came across the ocean to visit Ilfracombe, while we live in London and this is our first

visit. Our name is Yorke; I am Barbara and my sister is Elinor; we are here with our uncle, who is our guardian.' "

" 'Yorke,' said one of them, 'that is the name Mother has often told us of!' 'Yes,' said the other, 'and grandmama, and the aunts and Uncle Charlie; they have often told us of two gentlemen named Yorke who were so kind to them in Venice and here in Ilfracombe; come over and speak to mother.' So we crossed the room and Miss Walters said: 'Mother, these young ladies are named Yorke; I wonder whether they are related to the gentlemen you used to know?. Mrs. Walters turned, and oh, Uncle Harry, she is lovely, and so young. She shook hands with us and smiled so sweetly as she said: "I knew two gentlemen of that name when I was young; is that your father I saw with you?"

" 'No,' I answered, 'that is Uncle Harry, our father died when we were quite small.'

" 'And what was your father's name?'

" 'James,' I said, 'they used to call him Jim.'

" 'Jim and Harry,' she said, 'it must be the very same. 'I should like your uncle to call upon me, my dears; I am sure he will remember me; tell him my name was Benson. We are staying at No. 4 Runnacleave Crescent, just by the Catholic Church. I saw you at Mass; are you Catholics?'

" 'Oh, yes,' I said, 'we have always been Catholics.'

" 'And your uncle?' she asked.

" 'He became a Catholic after I was born; he is Elinor's godfather.'

"And now, Uncle Harry," Barbara continued, "we ran right off to tell you."

"You will call, won't you, Uncle?" asked Elinor anxiously.

"Yes, my dear, certainly," I replied, "I shall call this afternoon. I am afraid our trip to Lee must be deferred."

Elinor clapped her hands, exclaiming: "How delightful! Now we shall be friends, and they will go with us to Lee, and everywhere."

I had much ado during Barbara's recital to keep my composure, and I made two efforts before I could ask calmly:

"Is Mrs. Walters' name Mary?"

"Oh, we don't know that," said Barbara, "do you remember them, Uncle?"

"Yes," I answered, "I remember them well; there were three sisters, Teresa, Mary and Daisy; they were about your age when I knew them."

"The daughters' names are Mary and Daisy," remarked Elinor.

The tide was now quite out, so I told the girls to go and ramble about anywhere they pleased until luncheon time; I felt I wanted to be alone. They said they would go to the very peak of the Capstone and begin the books they got from the library.

I went below and sought out the stone under which I had found the glove, and sat there for an hour, thinking, dreaming. What would the afternoon reveal? Was I to meet Mary? But this was not Mary, I felt sure of that, yet, again, Mary married a man named Walters. How was I ever going to get myself calm enough for this interview?

CHAPTER III.

Impatiently I waited until four o'clock, which was as early as I felt I ought to call upon Mrs. Walters. Never was I in such a state of perturbation as when I rang the bell at No. 4 Runnacleave Crescent. I was shown into a cosy, home-like sitting-room at the right, and a lady came forward with outstretched hand to greet me. A beautiful woman, mature, yet youthful.

"Mr. Yorke," she said, "how glad I am to see you."

As soon as she spoke and looked up at me with merry eyes, I knew her.

"Miss Daisy!" I exclaimed, grasping her hand in both of mine, "Is it possible that this is you? Pardon me, I should say Mrs. Walters."

"Miss Daisy sounds quite natural, Mr. Harry; but sit down and give an account of yourself for all these—I am afraid to say how many years."

"I am consumed with impatience to hear all about yourself and your family," I replied.

"We must speak in turn," answered Mrs. Walters, "tell me, how is it I find you a Catholic?"

"I wish I had seen my way sooner," I said. "I became a Catholic in a little over two years after that summer we all spent here. Jim married a dear,

good Catholic girl. He joined her in about six months, and in a year after, I think it was, her example made me look into the claims of her religion with the result you see."

"I am sorry to hear that your brother is dead."

"Ah, yes! Poor Jim! He and his wife both died young, and left their dear little children to my care."

"They are beautiful girls," said Daisy, warmly, "and I am sure they are a great comfort to you."

"They are all I have," I replied, "and they are very dear to me, deservedly so, too. They are a solace and comfort to my old age."

"Oh, Mr. Yorke, you must not speak of old age!" exclaimed Daisy, "no one is old these days but the very aged. I cannot allow anyone of my generation to think of being old for another fifty years."

"You, at least, dear Mrs. Walters, have not yet begun to put in the semblance of early middle age; you might be your daughters' eldest sister. You seem to be the same merry cricket you were twenty-five years ago."

"Is it really twenty-five years? It is the spirit of the age, and the change in the fashion, which no longer requires a married woman to make a dowdy of herself; you see mothers and daughters all dress alike."

"A wise and sensible arrangement," I replied, "and now may I not hear a little news of my old friends? Tell me everything. First let me know how it is you are Mrs. Walters. Did not Mary marry a man of that name? or did you marry brothers?"

"Mary is not married," was the astonishing reply.

I sprang from my chair; "Mary not married! Why I had a letter from Dr. Reynolds a year after we were all here, telling me that she was married to a Dr. Walters."

"There was a mistake; I don't see how Dr. Reynolds could say that; I became engaged the winter following our visit here and was married in the summer. Can you remember how Dr. Reynolds worded his letter?"

"It was a mere casual remark in the middle of his letter. He said, 'Miss M. Benson is married to Dr. Walters.'"

"Ah, M.! that was it. I must say it was a very stupid way to put it."

"But you are Daisy!" I argued.

"My name is Margaret. Daisy is only a nickname."

I began to pace the room, for I was very much agitated. "Pardon me, Daisy," I said, "if I seem to be excited; do you know what this means to me? I have been a fool all through. Stupidly bigoted, when I wanted to marry your sister, I would not give in though it broke my heart. I never replied to Dr. Reynolds, or the mistake might have been cleared up. When I became a Catholic I thought it was too late to win the woman of my choice."

"Have you ever been to Ilfracombe since?" asked Daisy.

"Never! I would not return here. I thought it would be too painful to see the place again; it was

at the request of my nieces I came now."

"My husband and I came here for our honeymoon," said Daisy, "and the last twelve years we have been here nearly every second year. I brought the children when they were small, and they like it, so does my husband for a month's rest now and then. We discovered this house, kept by a Mrs. Morgan, and we always come here, living, as you English people say, in lodgings. We have a private sitting-room where our meals are served, and as many bed-rooms as our party requires. I expect my husband in about a week."

By this time I had somewhat recovered myself, and said: "Tell me about the rest of your family, your father and mother and Teresa."

"My father died about two years ago; my mother is still alive, and looks well, notwithstanding her seventy years. Indeed, I think she looks very little older than when you last saw her, that is in her children's eyes at any rate. Teresa, after taking five years to think about it, married Dr. Reynolds; she was twenty-eight when she married. You see I was the only impetuous one and married at twenty; but Dr. Walters was always a Catholic. Dr. Reynolds became one before his marriage. Poor Teresa has been a widow for five years; she has no children, and she and Mary live with mother. Charlie married a dear girl years ago, and they are very happy, with a large family. I have only my two girls."

"Does Mary ever come to Ilfracombe?" I ventured to ask.

"She comes nearly every year," was the reply. "Particularly since we discovered Mrs. Morgan, who is so kind to us; her house is like home, and Mary does not mind coming alone occasionally."

I groaned, "Fool, fool, that I have been. I feared to come, and all might have been so different if I had not been such a blockhead. Do you think, Mrs. Walters, that it would be of any use if I were to go to Canada now? Would Mary look at an old fellow like me? Is it too late? Did she ever care for me?"

"Mary never speaks of you," Daisy replied, "but I knew well enough, we all knew, at that time long ago, that she cared more than a little for you. She was very quiet and depressed for a long while; but she is too good to allow herself to be utterly crushed. I think that the reason she never married was because she cared so much, for she had plenty of good offers; and I think that is the secret of her love for Ilfracombe."

"I will take passage in the first ship going to Canada," I cried, jumping up.

"Sit down," said Daisy, laughing. "You need not go just this very minute. I expect the girls in shortly for tea, if you ever indulge in afternoon tea. I sent them out and told them to find your nieces and bring them back."

"I feel impatient to be off," I replied.

"Compose yourself, and try to be dignified when those young girls come," she said teasingly. "I think you may be spared a journey to Canada, for

Teresa and Mary are on the sea at present with my husband, and will be here in about a week."

"Why did you not tell me that before?" I exclaimed.

"I wanted to break it gently," she laughed, "besides I wanted to be quite sure that you wished to meet my sister."

"Wish to meet her! Daisy, I could shake you."

"And now, Mr. Harry, never speak of being an 'old fellow' again. You look young enough now, and if you tried, could make even a young girl fall in love with you, I believe. I must look after my own daughters."

The merry, teasing Daisy of old soon had me calmed down; and I was composed enough when a bevy of happy, laughing girls invaded the little sitting-room.

The years rolled off me like something palpable; I no longer felt old; I wondered that I had even thought I was old. My step became firm and elastic, my spirits as buoyant as a boy's. When I looked in my mirror I thought my eyes were bright and hopeful; my hair certainly was a little gray at the sides, and perhaps thinned a little on the temples; but there were no crow's feet, and, being clean shaven, in the prevailing fashion, I fancied that I looked almost as young as I did in moustache and whiskers twenty-five years ago. All of which goes to show that I was a vain old-young man.

CHAPTER IV.

I had to keep myself in constant motion that week to work off my impatience. I rushed my party off on daily excursions. I had five ladies now to pilot. We had a picnic on Lundy's Island; a day at Clovelly, another at Lee, where we all ate bread and cream and honey; I made them go to Bideford to visit the famous Pebble Ridge; and I insisted on their going to Barnstable on market day and going through the Barum Potteries. At length the momentous day dawned. Daisy had a telegram early one morning. The ship had arrived in Liverpool, and her husband and sisters would be in Ilfracombe that evening.

Daisy sent for me and said: "Now, Harry," we had dropped that Mrs. and Mr., "you must keep out of the way until I send for you."

"Will you keep me long, Daisy?" I shall be very impatient."

"Certainly you can't see Mary this evening. I must prepare her a little, and she will be tired; some time to-morrow, perhaps."

"To-morrow, certainly," I broke in, "would you

be cruel, Daisy, only think, it is twenty-five years since I saw her!"

"And you never expected to see her again," replied Daisy calmly; "a day or two longer won't hurt you."

"A day or two! I shall storm your house in less than twenty-four hours!"

"I wish you would go to London for a day or two."

"That I shall not, then; I shall stay right here, and go no further than the Capstone, and I warn you that if I see Mary anywhere I shall speak to her, you are not going to keep her prisoner, I suppose."

"Well, well, Mr. Impatience, I will arrange to let you see her to-morrow afternoon, but I have not yet decided how; it will depend upon circumstances. You shall have a note from me at lunch time."

And with this I was obliged to be satisfied. I spent the whole afternoon rambling about Hillsborough, the girls having gone to the bathing beach. From my perch I heard the whistle of the train, and could watch it winding around the opposite hills. When it stopped at the station I knew my Mary had arrived and wished for wings to fly over the intervening space.

The girls were lonely that evening, as their companions had told them they would stay at home with their father and aunts. I took them to the top of the Capstone and in a sheltered place they read their new magazines while I walked about.

The next morning I hoped Mary would be at Mass,

but she was not. Daisy and her daughters were there; as she passed out after Mass Daisy whispered: "Come around this afternoon about three."

I almost groaned at the hours I had to wait. "Does she know yet that I am here?"

"Not yet; be patient."

CHAPTER V.

After breakfast I went out upon the Capstone and watched the tide go out; the girls went to the library. As soon as the tide was far enough out, I descended to Mary's stone, and sat there with my head buried in my hands, but I was too restless to sit long; I walked around to the east side to inspect the cave once more and smoke my morning cigar. In about a half hour I returned to my former post, and, as I walked around a huge intervening rock, my heart stood still. There sat Mary, looking very little older than when I last saw her at the same spot. She wore a simple morning costume of white linen and a large hat with drooping feathers. Her hands were clasped in her lap as she gazed out to sea. She did not see me, and, mindful that Daisy had forbidden me to see her without permission, I walked quietly away.

I had not gone far when I remembered that I told Daisy that if I saw Mary anywhere I would speak to her; I retraced my steps; but how approach her? Would she be startled? Had Daisy told her about me? I could not come up behind her, so I made a detour, and rattled the gravel as I walked. She saw me and stood up uncertainly. I noted her graceful figure. When I came near enough to speak,

I held out my hand and said: "Miss Benson, Mary."

"Harry," she said, as she laid her hand in mine. We gazed at each other silently for a few seconds, and I was searching for something to say. Mary spoke first.

"I congratulate you upon having come into the Fold."

"Daisy has told you of me?" I said enquiringly.

"She told me you were here with two charming nieces, that your brother is dead, and that you were all Catholics."

"Did you know that she had forbidden me to see you until three o'clock this afternoon, when I was to go formally around to call at Mrs. Morgan's?"

Mary laughed, such a sweet, silvery, girlish laugh, it made me forget the lapse of years.

"No, she did not tell me; but of course she could not prevent my coming out, and without a chaperon, too, for Teresa is tired and Daisy and the girls are altogether occupied with the husband and father. But where are your nieces?"

"They have gone to the library," I replied, "and they have some mysterious shopping to do. May I bring them around to see you this afternoon?"

"Yes, do, I shall be charmed to meet them. My nieces are full of their praises; come a little later than three; let it be four, and have some afternoon tea. It is time now to return to lunch," she said, rising. As we went up over the rocks my mind was full of the last time we ascended that hill together, my heart was burning within me, and I asked myself shall I speak now? No, I said it would be too

abrupt. I saw her to the door of Mrs. Morgan's, then went into the church to return thanks to God that I had found my loved one again. Our first interview was over, and it had been very different from what I had anticipated; it seemed cold and commonplace. Yet, what could I expect? People don't fall upon one another's necks in real life.

I told the girls that we were to call upon the new arrivals at four; in the meantime they might do as they pleased with themselves, as I wished to wander about alone.

"Uncle Harry," said Elinor, "I am glad we brought you to Ilfracombe; we have not been here a fortnight yet, and you are already much better. I think you pore over your books too much when we are at home."

"Better, child," I said, "I have not been ill; how could I be better? Besides, if I remember rightly, I brought you to Ilfracombe; you said you and Barbara were in need of a change."

"But, uncle," broke in Barbara, "you really were not looking well before we came away, and you perhaps would have been ill. The sea has done wonders for you; you look quite young and sprightly. I am proud of my handsome uncle."

"Thank you, my dear," I replied, "you flatter your old uncle."

"You are not old," both exclaimed; "we will not allow you to say so; you might pass for our elder brother."

It was very sweet and soothing of the dear girls

to say so. I patted their heads and told them to meet me near Wildersmouth at five minutes to four.

At four precisely we presented ourselves at the door of Mrs. Morgan's house, that kindly lady herself opening the door and greeting us in refreshing Devonshire dialect as she showed us the Walters' sitting-room. Daisy was there, and Teresa; this was my first meeting with the latter; I found her more changed than the others, not looking old precisely, but in manner more subdued, and, being in mourning, she did not look so youthful as her sisters. She appeared glad to see me, giving me a warm pressure of the hand.

Daisy's two daughters came bounding in, followed by their father; as they had not seen my two girls for over twenty-four hours, there was a noisy greeting. Dr. Walters is a handsome man in the prime of life; he and I became friends at once. Lastly, Mary entered, and I called Barbara and Elinor to present them. They seemed attracted by the beautiful woman, and Mary gave them an affectionate embrace.

I inquired what Mrs. Benson was doing this summer. I thought it a pity she had not come to England.

"Mother has gone to Muskoka with Charlie and his family," answered Mary, "they have a charming bungalow on an island where they usually spend most of the summer."

"Don't you think our party is large enough?" asked Daisy; "my poor husband has five ladies to look after."

"If you will admit us into your party," I answered, "I have only two, and I will help Dr. Walters to the extent of one and a half of his."

At which nonsense they laughed, and Teresa said: "It is understood that you are of our party. When I write mother that we have found you again, she will be delighted. I am sorry about your brother. We have not forgotten your kindness to us when we were abroad for the first time."

After we had discussed our tea and bread and butter, Daisy proposed a walk before dinner. "The tide is much earlier now; it should be full at this hour; after dinner it will be receding."

"By all means a walk," said the doctor, "but I say, we can't go out in a procession like a boarding school."

"Let us walk up towards the Tors," I said, "we can go up the narrow path by the church, and send the children on ahead to break our party."

"Yes, that will be best," chimed in Teresa, "the Capstone is crowded at this hour. I shall go on with the girls; you others can follow—at intervals."

Kind Teresa, I thought, I can almost forgive your husband for the blunder he made when he led me to believe that Mary was married. Of course Mary and I brought up the rear. That is a very steep, narrow, winding path, but we were in no hurry.

On the way up I told Mary of Jim's marriage and conversion, of the letter I had received from Dr. Reynolds, which misled me, and how I became a Catholic in a little over a year from the time I supposed she had been married. "I can never forgive myself for my

stupidity in not making enquiries, but I really thought you were married, and that took all the life out of me. I found my consolation in my religion, though I sometimes felt it had come too late."

"Thank God that you are a Catholic," she breathed.

I perceived that the others were at the first parapet overlooking the sea, and, as we had nearly overtaken them, I whispered: "You must let me call for you to-morrow morning at ten and come out with me, will you?"

"I shall be ready," she assented.

We joined the others, and all stood for a time watching the sea breaking on the rocks below. On the return I walked down the hill with Teresa and we talked of Venice. She had been there twice since their first visit; they had all been there two or three times. This showed me my stupidity again, for I had never gone there since that fated summer.

"Do you remember," she asked, "showing us Desdemona's Palace? It is now taken into the Grand Hotel, and forms part of the hotel."

"What a pity," I answered, "but I suppose it is impossible to keep all those old places."

"The hotel was not large enough and there was no other way to have more room."

We left the Morgan contingent at their door and went to dinner. Strolling about the Capstone in the evening, I met Dr. Walters, and we enjoyed our smoke together. The party had broken up and mingled with the crowds to be found on the Capstone at this hour. I did not see Mary alone again. I had

only opportunity to whisper: "Remember, to-morrow morning," as I bade her good-night.

"I shall not forget," she replied, and for a moment she let her eyes rest on mine.

CHAPTER VI.

I called for Mary precisely at ten the next morning; there was no affectation of keeping me waiting; she was ready and met me at the door. The younger members of the party had gone off to the bathing beach, and I could trust Daisy not to let us be intruded upon. We began our walk almost in silence, with only some casual remark upon the day. We stopped for a moment at Wildersmouth. The tide was out, and we commented upon the fact that it was getting a little earlier each day. At most seaside places the shore is dreary when the tide is out; not so here; those magnificent rocks of all sizes and forms give the coast a charm hard to beat.

We turned naturally towards the Capstone, and walked around the promenade to the north side, when we stood at the parapet looking on the sea. I noticed that the shore all about the part where I wanted to take Mary was pretty dry, though a huge rock as big as a house hid "Mary's stone" from view. "Will you come down?" I asked. Without a word we began the descent.

I installed Mary comfortably on her own old rock, and seated myself at her side. She, as before, with averted head, gazed out to sea.

"Mary," I said, as I laid my hand on hers, "won't you look at me?"

She turned her head and gave me one glance, which was not a discouraging one, then looked past me straight at the rock behind.

"I have brought you here," I went on nervously, "to repeat the question I asked you nearly twenty-five years ago. I have loved you faithfully all these years, though I never expected to see you again. Had I known you were not married I would have sought you out as soon as I became a Catholic. Often have I blamed myself for the stupid bigotry that caused me to let you slip out of my life; for it was only bigotry; it was not religious conviction or anything of that sort. I was not a religious man; I was only bigoted. And to think that so soon after I should become a Catholic! It was almost maddening to realize what I had lost. Is it too late now? Can you love me a little? I dare to think I could make you happy. I am approaching what the world calls old age, but my heart is as young as when I first offered it to you, and it is wholly yours, has always been so. Will you be my wife?" and I tightened my grasp upon her hand which had not been withdrawn from mine. Then Mary looked at me, and there were tears in her eyes.

"Harry, I have never heard of you since you and I parted here, excepting a word or two casually dropped by Dr. Reynolds, in which he expressed a wonder that you never wrote to him. I thought you had forgotten me, had probably married long ago; I did not know of your conversion, nor that you sup-

posed me to be married. Had I known I think I would have ventured to write you myself to contradict it. But I knew nothing until I arrived here the evening before last. You may imagine how agitated I was at the thought of meeting you again; I had to exercise all the self-control, in which I have schooled myself for so many years, to appear calm. I have always loved you since the happy days when we used to go about in a gondola in Venice. It nearly broke my heart when I had to refuse you, but nothing would induce me to do anything contrary to God's law; I did not even feel tempted to do so; my heart might suffer, but my soul must conquer. It is not too late now to be happy, and my hand willingly follows my heart."

I stooped over and reverently kissed the hand I still held.

"I must wait until I can go up to London for an engagement ring," I said, "unless I can get one that will suit me here. I will try this afternoon. You have made me very happy, Mary, far more so than I deserve; I am very grateful to God Who has been so good to me, and I will always prove to you that I am a faithful lover."

"You have proved that already, Harry," said Mary, laughing. "Could anyone ask more than twenty-five years' devotion?"

"You also, dearest Mary, have been faithful beyond my deserts. There never was another woman possible for me. I did not even consider it as faithfulness; my whole being was filled with you, and although I might not have you, yet no one could

dislodge your image from my heart. I have known many good women, handsome, and no doubt charming, but none spoke to my heart; it was not that I compared them to you and found them wanting; it did not occur to me to do so. You were on a plane so far above all others, that comparisons were altogether out of the question. I am usually looked upon as a man without a heart; 'Yorke could never love a woman,' I have heard men say."

"It has been something the same in my own case," Mary acknowledged, "my heart was gone from me forever and it was of no use trying to care for anyone else. My mother and father naturally wished to see me settled and there were many good offers that met with their approval, and that any girl would be safe in accepting. My parents were very indulgent; they knew how it was, and never urged me."

"I wish your father were alive to know of this now," I said.

"I wish he were, indeed," replied Mary. "I must write to my mother at once, Harry; she will be so pleased."

"By all means write to her to-day, and tell Teresa and Daisy. And might I ask you, dearest, not to tell the young girls until I have had a chance to tell Barbara and Elinor? I should like them to see a little more of you, at least for another day. I am sure they will learn to love you. They are dear girls and, Mary, they are as my own children. I have had them since they were babies almost, and they have no one else."

"They shall be as my children, too, Harry, I promise it; and I shall love them dearly, not only for your sake and their father's, but also for their own amiable qualities."

"Thank you," I said, "I have every confidence in you." After a pause I continued: "You will not keep me long, will you? After twenty-five years I shall not have patience to wait much longer. Can't we be married very soon?"

"Pretty soon," she replied, smiling, "but you must give me a little time. I must write to my mother; I don't anticipate any objection from her, but I must let her know before I make any arrangements."

"Why can't we be married in England, here in Ilfracombe?" I asked, "and let me take you to Canada as my bride; it would be a much better arrangement than letting you return first and following in another ship? I don't want to let you out of my sight again, now I have found you."

"Perhaps," she replied, "but let me think over it a little first; remember I did not know two days ago that I was ever to see you again; all this is so sudden and a little confusing. I will write to mother to-day."

"I shall also write her," I broke in, "this is only the middle of June; there can be an answer at least in a month, and perhaps in less time, in twenty days if no time be lost. I shall ask your mother to consent to our being married here on the first of August."

"Oh, Harry," she remonstrated, "you take my breath away."

"Well, early in August, anyway, very early."

"Remember, it is my privilege to 'name the day,' " she said, laughing. "And now it is time to go to lunch," rising. As I rose I took her hand, saying: "May I have one kiss, dearest?" She did not deny me.

At Mrs. Morgan's door she said: "I shall remain in this afternoon to write letters. I shall not see you again until after dinner." I could only bow to the will of my queen.

CHAPTER VII.

During the afternoon I called at the largest jewelers in the town; he had some beautiful rings, but not just what I wanted. He promised to send to London for a five-stone diamond ring, which arrived in two days, and, with intense satisfaction, I placed it on Mary's finger.

On the same day I took Barbara and Elinor to the top of the Capstone, to a certain nook we knew of, and where I knew we would not be disturbed. I felt as nervous as a school-boy at what I had to tell them. I knew nothing was further from their thoughts than the idea of my marriage; they knew nothing of the romance of my early life.

When we were seated I asked, "How do you like Miss Benson?"

"She is a darling," said Elinor.

"I love her," said Barbara, "she is the sweetest woman I ever met."

"How would you like her for your aunt?"

"Aunt!" both cried aghast.

"Oh, uncle," said Elinor, "are you going to be married? What will become of us?" and the poor child burst into tears.

Barbara said nothing, but tears were in her eyes.

"You will always be my very dear children," I said, "as you always have been, and your new aunt already loves you dearly. Think how delightful it will be to have a lovely aunt as well as a crusty old uncle!" But Elinor continued to weep. I gathered the poor little one in my arms to comfort her, when Barbara startled me by saying, "You will not want me to keep house any longer, Uncle Harry."

In truth I had not thought of the house, or who was to keep it. I gathered my wits about me and said: "My wife, of course, will be mistress of my house, but you will be always the much loved daughters of us both. I think, my children, you have no cause to doubt the love of your uncle. Listen to what I am about to tell you."

I put my arm around Barbara also, and drew them both close to me; indeed I felt how dear they were to me. I then told them the whole story of their father and myself first meeting the Bensons. Of the love Mary and I soon had for each other, of the cause of our separation, and of our apparently accidental meeting this summer and our discovery that we still loved one another.

"Is that the reason you never married, Uncle Harry?" asked Elinor.

"That is the reason," I replied.

"Is it also the reason Miss Benson did not marry?" asked Barbara.

"The same reason," I replied.

"Darling uncle!" exclaimed Elinor, flinging her arms around my neck, "you deserve to be happy. I am glad you are going to be married."

"Let me in, Elinor," said Barbara, getting her arms around from the other side. "I am going to love Aunt Mary ever so much, and I hope you will be doubly happy for your long wait."

I stood in danger of being choked between these dear girls, but I was immensely relieved that my task was happily over. "And now, my little ones," I said, "will you call upon Miss Benson to-day?"

"Let us go at once," said Barbara, "it is just four o'clock now."

"Do you think she will let us call her Aunt Mary right away?" asked Elinor.

"I am sure she will be gratified if you do," I replied.

Mary, of course, expected us and was alone. The meeting was all I could desire. My two girls, while they were enthusiastic, behaved very prettily, and I was proud of them. Teresa and Daisy soon came in. They, of course, had known of our engagement and gave me a warm welcome; so had Dr. Walters. Mary and Daisy Walters were still in ignorance; they arrived simultaneously with the tea. Barbara and Elinor were deputed to tell them, much to their delight. Great was their surprise, and their joy, too, for they had always liked me, they said naively, and quite approved of me for an uncle, and were charmed to have these two dear girls as cousins. Then Aunt Mary had to show her new ring, which she did shyly enough. Good Mrs. Morgan, who had been bringing in the tea, could not help hearing what was going on. She now came forward. "Beg pardon, sir, but may I congratulate you, and you

too, Miss? I have known Miss Benson these many years, sir, and I will say you are to be congratulated, and I hope, as I think, too, that you are worthy of her."

"Oh, Mrs. Morgan!" exclaimed Mary.

"Quite right, Mrs. Morgan," I said, "I shall try to become worthy of her; thank you for your congratulations. Perhaps we may have the wedding here."

"I should be proud indeed, sir."

Mary shook her finger at me.

The days sped happily by. I went up to London for a few days to make some arrangements, for I was quite determined to be married in August. At the end of the first week in July came letters from Mrs. Benson. Her letter to me was far kinder than I deserved. She gave full consent that Mary should be married in England; indeed she thought it would be better so.

In triumph I carried my letter off to Mary. "Now, then," I said, "you must name a very early day; why not the first of August?"

"That is only three weeks; how could I get ready? I must go to London and get some clothes?"

"Why can't you get your clothes after instead of going to London in this heat?"

"At least I must have a gown to be married in."

Here Daisy interferred. "You don't know anything about it, Harry. I can't let Mary be married like an old dowd; she is far too pretty for that; she must have a real wedding gown; she will be a lovely bride."

"She never could look like an old dowd, do what you would. But let me hear your plans, I can see you are full of them."

"Mary and Teresa had better go to London tomorrow for a fortnight; in that time they could select and order all they want and have the necessary fittings, then return here and wait for the things to be sent; they perhaps would not require to go to London again."

"And be married when?" I asked. "Mary, I appeal to you. Is this long absence in London necessary?"

"I fear it is, Harry, a fortnight will not be long, and we might be married in the middle of August, on the fifteenth, if possible, Our Lady's day."

"That is a day of obligation, and there is only one priest here," said Daisy. "But, Harry, you might see Father Williams, and ascertain whether he could have a marriage on that day."

"I shall certainly do so without delay, and if it is not to be the fifteenth, it will be the fourteenth, understand well that I will not wait a day longer."

Teresa joined us now and agreed with the plans so far. She reminded us that it was time to secure our passage on a steamer for Canada, as it would be impossible to get them at the last moment.

"That is very true," said Daisy. "Do you object, Harry, to our all going on the same vessel?"

"Certainly not," I replied, "I should like two or three weeks to take Mary to the Lakes and to North Wales, with a few days in London to settle some matters before sailing, then, ho! for Canada."

"You and Jack, then, had better see about it; you can telegraph to London; try to get one of the Empresses; there will be nine passages to take; what a crowd we shall be!"

"Now if you insist upon going to London for a fortnight," I said to Mary, "Barbara shall go with you, and you shall stay in our house; old Thomas and Betty are in charge, and William and the horses want a little stirring up; they have had nothing to do all this time."

"Oh, no, Harry," demurred Mary, "that would never do."

"Why not?" I asked. "If you don't go to our house, I will go up myself and call every day at your hotel and torment the life out of you. Be reasonable! If you must go at all, you will find it much cooler and more restful at Lancaster Gate, and there are horses and carriages at your disposal."

The four girls now came in; it was nearly tea-time. I told Barbara she was to go to London the next day and entertain Teresa and Mary while they did their shopping, at which Elinor said, "I must go, too, Uncle Harry."

I added, "Why not let the four girls go? I dare say they could contrive to enjoy themselves?"

"Oh, yes!" they all said, "we have to get our bridesmaids' dresses."

So it was settled. I told Barbara to get one or two of William's daughters to help Betty.

Time seemed slow while they were all away. Daisy complained that our party had been broken up. We secured our passage on the "Empress of

Ireland," for September the tenth, and there was nothing more to do but to wait and ramble about. After the others came back I was banished for a week before the wedding. Barbara and Elinor, at their own wish, returned with me to Lancaster Gate. They felt it was the last they would have of me to themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

I took with me a young barrister; I knew he would be happy to go anywhere if he might have a little of my Elinor's society, though he was ten years her senior. Three young gentlemen staying at the hotel had promised their services, so we had a large wedding party. The marriage took place on the fourteenth. Father Williams could not manage it for the fifteenth. Never did a more lovely bride stand in the little Catholic church at Ilfracombe. There was quite a ripple of excitement all through the town; the church was crowded.

Mrs. Morgan, with the assistance of two or three maids and a couple of imported waiters, did marvels in the way of a breakfast. When the time came for us to leave we found all the guests from the "Ilfracombe Hotel" drawn up outside, and they gave us a rousing send off.

There remains little to be told of my story. We had a happy journey to Canada, and I was delighted to see Mrs. Benson again. She is a handsome old lady, and wears her years gracefully. She greeted us warmly. Charlie, too, was glad to see me, and I made the acquaintance of his charming wife and family.

My two girls won golden opinions, so much so

that I was obliged to consent to their remaining the winter with Mrs. Benson.

My wife and I returned alone to Lancaster Gate. We have been at home for a month. Christmas Day is two days off. As I write the concluding lines to the story I began so sadly last May, my wife is seated not far away, reading a letter from her mother.

Mary interrupted me here with the exclamation: "Harry, I am afraid you will have to let Barbara live in Canada; mother writes that young Stanton is very attentive to her. Do you remember you met him often; he used to come to mother's?"

"Yes, I remember him, but she must come home first, Mary."

"Oh, of course! Perhaps young Stanton will not be in such a hurry as you were. He is a good Catholic, and doing very well. If Barbara cares for him, there can be no objection."

"Well, we shall see; I want to show you something, Mary. Do you remember this?" and I handed her the little green glove I had in a drawer of my desk. She looked at it doubtfully for a moment, then she exclaimed: "I believe it is the glove I lost on the beach that day long ago."

"The very same; I returned the next morning and found it. And the memories called up at sight of that glove last spring were the cause of my visit to Ilfracombe and meeting you again. So I owe much to it, my dear wife," I concluded as I reverently put it away again in my desk.

THE
PATCH OF WHITE HAIR



CHAPTER I.

They sat opposite to one another in the crowded street car,—the young man and the girl. He had boarded the car at the corner of King and Toronto streets, she at Yonge. It was a King Street car speeding west to Parkdale, about five-thirty on a dreary November evening. It had been raining hard all day, and though the rain had ceased, the sky was murky and dismal and the streets as muddy as Toronto streets know how to be.

The young man was about thirty-three years of age, tall and well-built, with dark hair, and eyes of a kindly expression. Now he looked thoughtful, for he was trying to work out a problem for one of his clients; he was a successful stock broker and was rapidly calculating in his mind what might be made or lost in certain transactions. At the same time his mind was making a running comment on the young girl opposite to him. The two ideas ran something like this:

“Now if Thompson were to sell his ‘Hollinger’ at ten—seems to me I’ve seen that girl before—at ten-fifty, he might make—she’s rather pretty—he might make, say five thousand—what pretty, brooding eyes she has; she is looking right past me over my left shoulder—five thousand now, but if he holds

on a little—I wonder what she is thinking about, she doesn't see me at all; she is—well not shabbily dressed, but not quite up-to-date, though I don't know much about women's attire,—Pshaw!” with a mental shake, “Thompson shouldn't sell that ‘Hollinger’ now; it's bound to go up,—she hasn't one of those monstrous hats; what small feet she has, but, by George! She has no rubbers! She will catch her death of cold; I wonder who she is? She is a lady, but not one of the fashionables; I warrant she has a position in some curmudgeon's office who doesn't know how to treat her, nor pay her a decent salary. I'm sure I've seen her before about this time going home on the car.”

Her thoughts ran thus:

“I've seen that gentleman often and often on the car about this time; I wonder who he is?—it's only a month to Christmas. I would so like to give mother and all of them just what they would like most for Christmas; if only Darch & Darch would—He's looking straight past me, out upon the dismal weather,—would give me that increase they have been promising,—he is very handsome, and what kind eyes,—promising for a year, I could get mother a new hat, she needs one sadly; why, she hadn't a new one last winter! and Mollie's dress—he seems to be in a brown study, what a beautiful fur-lined coat he has—Mollie's dress, I wonder whether I could fix it up a little on the next half-holiday?—what shapely hands he has, and beautifully trimmed nails—George must be kept at College; if it is really true that he has a vocation, he must have every chance,

and poor mother's income is so very small now. Mollie, too, and poor little Bill must not be taken from school."

The car stopped with a jolt at Bromley Avenue, the girl looked up with a start; she did not know she was so near home, but the man had pulled the bell. They rose simultaneously and darted for the exit; they glanced at one another; the man raised his hat as he made way for the girl to pass first. She jumped hurriedly from the car and sped away north, far up, near Queen Street, then turned west along an obscure street to an unpretentious dwelling which, however, on entering, one found to be cosy and home-like; and though the furniture was well worn and shabby, there was an appearance of refinement which spoke of "better days."

He left the car more deliberately and stood a minute watching the little figure tripping along the wet sidewalk, and, wishing she had on rubbers, he turned to walk south to his home, one of Parkdale's handsome residences.

* * * * *

"Where are you, Mother?" sang out Hester Clancy, as she entered her cosy if shabby home. A bright fire burned in the little parlor, but through motives of economy, the gas had not yet been lighted.

"Here I am, dear," replied a sweet-faced lady of about fifty-five, as she entered the room. "Mollie and I have been putting the finishing touch to the dinner, but George has not come in; he said he would be a little late this evening."

A shadow crossed Hester's face. "I wish, mother dear, you could keep even one maid to relieve you of all this work, or if I could only get home earlier; it is hard on Mollie when she comes from school to have to see to the dinner, and you have altogether too much work to do."

"You must not worry your little head about that, Hester, thank God I have very good health, and shall not be old for years to come; as for Mollie, a little domestic work is good for her. Are your feet wet, dear? You had better go and change your shoes."

"Yes, and as George has not come in, I shall have time to do my hair and trim myself up a little before dinner. Where is Bill?"

"He is out helping Mollie."

After Hester left the room Mrs. Clancy turned the gas low and sighed as she thought: "Poor little Hester, how I wish she could take her proper place in the world; it is hard to see her going off day after day to work in a dingy office; but she is always so bright and loving."

* * * * *

"Good evening, mother," said John James Meredith as he entered the brilliantly lighted drawing-room where his mother sat near a cheerful fire. "It is good to come into this warm and cosy room out of the dismal weather," he continued, bending to kiss his mother, a handsome, well-preserved woman of about fifty-five, with not one gray hair in her head.

Now that we see John Meredith without his hat, we perceive a streak of white hair about the eighth

of an inch along the left side of his head lying upon the black. He had often been asked by his barbers to allow them to "treat" this white streak, but he laughingly declined, saying it would do to identify him when he was lost, besides his father had just such a white lock.

"Is it raining, now, John?" asked Mrs. Meredith.

"No, mother, but it is very wet and muddy and generally gloomy. I saw a girl in the car without rubbers; she got off at this corner and turned north."

"Probably she sacrificed her feet to her head and had a particularly charming hat; but what a strange thing for you to notice, John."

"Yes, I admit that it was foolish," replied John, "but it seemed to get on my nerves; however, I can assure you her hat did not profit by the lack of rubbers. I must go and get ready for dinner."

Mrs. Meredith looked thoughtfully after her son, her only child, and she had been a widow for many years. Needless to say her son was the axis upon which the world turned. Her husband had left her well off, and her son was doing well, so her lines had fallen in pleasant places. She said to herself, "I wonder what attracted him in that girl? How absurd to notice that she had no rubbers!"

CHAPTER II.

The weeks rolled speedily by to Christmas. Hester and John nearly always found themselves in the same car going home. He would look eagerly along the line of faces on each side until he saw her; she would take one shy glance, and, if he were present, she felt content. On the evenings they did not chance to take the same car, he would feel a distinct sense of disappointment, and to her the long ride seemed more dreary than ever. He soon formed the habit of raising his hat as they left the car together, then becoming bolder, he ventured to say "good evening," to which she demurely responded "good evening," before tripping northward.

On one Sunday, shortly after the first conscious meeting, as she was about to leave church after High Mass, she raised her eyes to the choir and there she beheld Mr. Meredith, though she did not then know his name; he was gazing gravely down upon her. The sight gave her a sudden thrill of delight; "He is then a Catholic," she thought.

After this the "good evening" became more cheery on his part and less distant on hers.

One evening at dinner Hester said: "Mother, there is a gentleman who lives in Parkdale, down on the fashionable side, who is always on the same

street car as I am coming home; he gets off at Bromley Avenue and goes south. It seems so absurd always getting off at the same corner that we say 'good evening' now. I saw him at church last Sunday; I am so glad he is a Catholic."

"I don't see how it affects you, Hester," said George; "why should you care what church he goes to?"

"George, I am surprised to hear you say that," replied Hester. "Are we not desirous that even the heathen Chinese should have the faith? Then why not a man who lives in the same town?"

"Of course," put in Mollie, "it was only because Hester would be glad to see anyone a Catholic that she was pleased to see this gentleman in church; and if you are going to be a priest, George, you ought to feel the same. What was he like, Hester?"

George seemed to have nothing to say to this, and Mrs. Clancy saved Hester an answer by saying:

"You must be careful, my child, about picking up chance acquaintances in the street cars. What sort of a man is this?"

"Oh, mother, there is no acquaintance, I assure you; he is a gentleman; besides he is so old. I am sure he is upwards of thirty!"

Her mother laughed heartily.

"Thirty! Why, child, do you call that old? You must think your mother very ancient at fifty-five."

"Oh, a mother is not the same," exclaimed Hester. "Mothers are never old until they are at least ninety."

On Christmas Eve John was very much afraid he would miss seeing Hester. Perhaps she would go home early, and if he went early she might be late, even later than usual. He went home to lunch as there was nothing doing in his office. In the afternoon he went down town again and wandered in and out of several shops; he had already provided his mother's Christmas gift, and a few others he intended giving. If only he dared to give her a present! But, of course, it was out of the question.

Shortly after five he took up his station at the corner of King and Yonge and determined to keep watch there until the very last possible minute to see whether she would board the car. It was a wretched evening, the streets were muddy and a fine drizzling rain fell. It was not at all like the traditional Christmas weather.

He had not long to wait; he was rewarded by seeing her coming down Yonge street, her arms laden with parcels, a happy smile on her face. She had on her rubbers, but her hands were too much occupied to hold up her umbrella. John stepped into a doorway that she might not see him, then after she had struggled in with her parcels, he followed leisurely. He did not go to the same end of the car, but contented himself with knowing she was on board. He communed with himself on the way out, and asked himself what was to be the outcome of all this. He acknowledged that he was dangerously near being in love with this girl whose name he did not know. He had observed her in church with a sweet-looking lady he took to be her mother, a fine looking youth

and a boy and girl, her brothers and sister, he supposed. He knew he could find out all about her by enquiries at the Presbytery, but this he did not choose to do; he would not spy upon her; he preferred to judge for himself. He was determined to make her acquaintance that very evening.

On reaching Bromley Avenue, John got off first. Hester had to push through the crowd and dropped one of her parcels at John's feet. She was greatly confused, but John seized the opportunity and picked it up. Instead of returning it, he raised his hat, saying:

"You must really allow me to help you with those parcels, or you will be dropping them all over the place. See it is beginning to rain and you have no hand for your umbrella."

He began to transfer the parcels to his own arms while she protested.

"Oh, no, really it is too kind of you, but I can manage."

"Now please raise your umbrella," he said coolly. "My name is John Meredith, John James, to be quite explicit; if you lead the way I shall follow, humbly bearing your parcels."

"My name is Hester Clancy," said poor Hester, feeling very much confused and knowing that she ought not to allow this; but what was she to do with this masterful young man who had all her parcels? She could not call a policeman. So she walked demurely beside him, and soon felt strangely contented.

"I saw you in church," began John, as an intro-

duction. And Hester had to acknowledge that she also had seen him.

"Is that your mother and the rest of the family I sometimes see with you?"

"Yes, mother and George, who says he wants to be a priest, and Mollie, who is very, very clever and doing so well at St. Joseph's Convent, she will begin at the University next year; little Bill is only fourteen and goes to the Brothers' School at present."

"My mother is usually in a pew a short distance in front of you."

"What, that beautiful lady with the lovely sables?" Hester stopped, abashed.

"Yes, that beautiful lady is my mother. Your own mother, too, can lay some claim to beauty. She must have been very pretty when young."

"My mother is the dearest, sweetest and loveliest woman there ever was," exclaimed Hester; "but here we are at my home. Will you not come in, Mr. Meredith? Mother would be glad to thank you for helping me?"

"Not this evening, thank you, Miss Clancy; it is Christmas Eve and my own mother will be expecting me. She has not so many to bless her as your mother has. I am her one ewe lamb. But if you will allow me to call some evening during the Christmas holidays, I should like to make the acquaintance of the 'dearest, sweetest mother there ever was.' May I?"

"Certainly, Mr. Meredith, come any evening you wish. Mother will be glad to meet you."

As John raised his hat and turned away, he was well pleased with his venture. He walked on air all the way home, and entered the house whistling.

"You seem in great good humor, John," remarked his mother.

"Yes, mother," he replied, "it is Christmas Eve, you know."

Later in the evening John enquired:

"Mother, did you ever notice a lady with her daughter and sons a few pews behind you in church?"

"I have sometimes observed them on my way out. The mother's face puzzles me. I feel as though I had seen her before, but I can't place her; the eldest girl is very lovely."

"She is the girl who had no rubbers on that day," said John, quietly.

"Ah!" replied his mother.

CHAPTER III.

Hester felt very much subdued when she entered the house. What would mother say, after warning her not to make acquaintances in the street cars. When they were all comfortably settled around the fire after dinner, Hester began diplomatically: "Mother, did you ever notice that handsome lady with the lovely sable furs who sits a few pews in front of us at church?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clancy, "I have often seen her as she passed out; there is something familiar in her expression, though of course I do not know her, but it seems to me as though I had dreamed of her, or had known her in a previous existence, which, of course, is nonsense."

"Well, mother, it was her son who I told you gets off the car at Bromley Avenue, and this evening my parcels fell as I got off the car, and he picked them up and insisted upon carrying them home; indeed, mother, I could not help it; I couldn't snatch them from him; and he wants to call upon you after Christmas, and I said he might." Hester braced herself for the scolding she feared she would get.

"And what is the name of this elderly gentleman of thirty, I think you said he was?"

Hester looked up and saw her mother smiling;

she was not to be scolded; she gave a sigh of relief.

"His name is Mr. Meredith."

"Meredith!" exclaimed Mrs. Clancy.

"John James Meredith, he said was his full name."

Mrs. Clancy rose from her seat, exclaiming:

"John James Meredith!—but of course it cannot be the same."

"Why, mother, do you know him?" cried all the children at once.

Mrs. Clancy seated herself again, saying calmly:

"No, children, of course I do not know him; the John James Meredith I knew lived in Louisville, Kentucky, and would be an old man now, while Hester's elderly gentleman is only thirty or thereabouts."

"Tell us about him, mother," they all cried, and drew nearer the fire and settled themselves comfortably for a story.

"I don't know that I shall tell you about him, children; yet why not? It is an old story now; this is Christmas Eve, and it was on Christmas Eve, just thirty-five years ago, that it happened, when I was only twenty, two years younger than you, Hester."

Mrs. Clancy paused and gazed into the fire as though calling up memories of the past.

"Go on, mother," said Mollie, impatiently.

"You know, children, that my father was at one time rich and we lived in a beautiful mansion in Louisville, Kentucky. In the old days we had slaves. When I was a little girl the war broke out and when the slaves were freed my father lost a

good deal; still we lived on in the old mansion, and I knew very little difference, as my old mammy never left my mother. I was an only child. I used to go out a good deal in society and often met John Meredith, who was of our circle. He was a handsome man, much less than thirty, Hester, and when I was about nineteen he let me see that he admired me, though he did not say so. My father and mother and friends thought it was only a matter of a short time when he would ask me to marry him. Of course, my young heart was moved and I was ready to accept him. My old mammy used often to say, 'You will make a lubly bride, Missy Hester, poor ole Mammy Chloe wants to put de veil on yo' head.'

"Upon Christmas Eve, thirty-five years ago to-day, a dozen of us made up a party to go to the Mammoth Cave. Two young matrons with their husbands were our chaperons; John Meredith was of the party, and Lucy Ecclestone and I, who had been close friends since our school days. We were of the same age. We started very early in the morning, as we wanted to be back that evening, being Christmas Eve. When we arrived at the hotel we put on the queer garb they provide for those who visit the caves. We had great merriment over the hideous costume. Lucy, who was a lovely girl, far more beautiful than I ever could be, looked simply enchanting in the grotesque clothing, and so thought John Meredith. She seemed bent on capturing him, and he was easily persuaded. I had to be content with the attentions of a young fellow who was unattached. The cave we had often visited before, but

this time we were determined to visit the "pits," the walk there and back being about seven miles. You have often heard me describe the Mammoth Cave."

"Go on, mother, tell us more about the Cave," all cried.

"There is nothing particular about the entrance excepting that it seems huge enough for the whole cave. When we entered the bat chamber and the bats, disturbed by the stones the guides threw at them, began to fly about, I noticed that Lucy clung as though in terror on John Meredith's arm. It is a weird sight, but I had been there so often I no longer felt nervous. We passed through chamber after chamber of these wonderful caves; the theatre, the Cathedral, the star chamber; we sat in the giant's chair, saw the wraith of Martha Washington, crept through narrow passages we could barely pass through, and came upon a place that was instantly brought to my memory when, years later, I read Rider Haggard's 'She.' I am sure he must have visited the Mammoth Cave, for in his description of the passage of 'She' through the earth to its centre, he pictures just such an awful spot as this, with huge boulders piled one upon another, and one unbalanced as the companion of 'She' is said to have done when he stepped awkwardly upon it. Here we had to creep through a hole and let ourselves down by rugged stones to a lower depth, a cave beneath a cave, where there is a spring of water. We all drank of the water and returned, John helping Lucy all the time. We went on to the 'pits,' three

huge pits; I cannot tell the diameter, probably fifteen to twenty feet. There is just a narrow passage where one may walk between them, and the guides threw blazing torches down, which became tiny stars and flickered and went out before we could see the bottom. We returned by a different route. John always attending Lucy. We were not the least bit tired by our long walk, for the air of the Mammoth Cave is so invigorating that people never tire walking there.

"We took the train as soon as we could get into civilized clothing and returned to Louisville. I got home shortly after seven, a little depressed, but not tired.

"The next day was Christmas, always a happy festival with us; we all went to an early Mass and later to High Mass.

"John did not call all day, though the previous Christmas he spent a greater part of the afternoon and evening with us. Neither did he call all during Christmas week. Early in January Lucy came to see me and very gently told me she was engaged to John Meredith. I wished her every happiness. Of course I could not blame John; he had said nothing to me, and if he fancied for a time that he cared for me he was at perfect liberty to change his mind; and Lucy was very fascinating. They were married early in February and I soon got over my disappointment.

"You know the rest. When my father died, my mother found there was not much left for us; we

had to move into a smaller house; old Mammy Chloe never left us until she died. My mother died when I was about twenty-five, and I moved to New York to live with my aunt, mother's sister, whose means were small, but she gave me a home. I met your dear father in New York and was married when I was thirty. My married life was very happy; your father always supplied me plentifully; but when he died he left me very little. He was a successful lawyer, but lived up to his means, I suppose. My dear old aunt was dead, and friends advised me to come to Canada, where I could live more cheaply than in New York, and here we are!"

"What a thrilling story, mother," said George, "and a Christmas story too. I wonder whether this Mr. Meredith of Hester's is any relation to that other Meredith?"

"Hester's Mr. Meredith, indeed," said that young lady, "what do you mean, George, by such a speech?"

"Well, for my part," remarked Mollie, "I'm very glad you did not marry that Mr. Meredith. I would much rather our father should be your husband."

"I'm dying with curiosity to see this Mr. Meredith," Bill observed. "He must be a jolly old fellow to help Hester with her parcels. By the way, where are those parcels?"

"You shall all see the contents to-morrow morning," Hester promised. "Now it is time for bed, for we have to be up early in the morning if we go to six o'clock Mass."

"I shall remain for three Masses and not return for High Mass," Mrs. Clancy informed them.

"Very well, mother, and now, to bed."

CHAPTER IV.

That same evening John Meredith quietly remarked to his mother:

"I walked home with that little girl this evening, mother; she was laden down with parcels, for Christmas, I suppose, and had more than she could carry; it was raining, too."

To which Mrs. Meredith replied, "Oh, did you?" and did not enquire what little girl.

* * * * *

Two days after Christmas John Meredith addressed Hester as they alighted from the car at Bromley Avenue, and asked whether he might call that evening, to which she said something about mother being delighted to meet him.

"At half-past eight, then," he said, as he raised his hat, and he walked home on stilts.

Hester fairly ran home.

"Oh, mother," she said, bursting into the house, "he's coming at half-past eight this evening; we must hurry with dinner."

"Who's coming?" asked Mrs. Clancy.

But she knew, and she was more impatient than she wished to show to see this new John James Meredith.

Promptly at half-past eight the door bell rang and was promptly responded to by Bill, who, with a grin, showed Mr. Meredith into the parlor where Mrs. Clancy and Hester sat. It had been arranged that the others should come in later.

"In order," George remarked, "not to overwhelm him with the magnitude of our family."

John divested himself of his overcoat and hat, which he left in the hall. Hester met him at the door and brought him forward to present him to her mother.

Mr. Meredith!" gasped Mrs. Clancy, "John James Meredith without a doubt; you are the image of your father, even to the white lock of hair."

"My father!" exclaimed John Meredith, "did you know my father?"

"I am sure of it now that I see you," replied Mrs. Clancy, and she marvelled that she was so calm; "I thought the name might be a coincidence when Hester spoke of you, but there is no mistaking the likeness. Did your father live in Louisville, Kentucky?"

"Yes, I was born there; and did you know my mother?"

"Was your mother Lucy Ecclestone?"

"Yes, that was her name."

"I knew her well," said Mrs. Clancy, "we were school friends."

"How delighted my mother will be," exclaimed John Meredith; "that accounts for the feeling she has that she has seen you before."

"Does she feel that?" asked Mrs. Clancy. "I

have had just the same fancy on seeing your mother, but we have not met for over thirty years. My name was Hester Belle."

Then the others came in and were told the wonderful story, and they shook hands again all around and spent a right merry evening.

John was just brimful of happiness, and Hester felt glad that her mother had not married this man's father, she would rather—, but there, we must not pry into a maiden's fancy.

When John started for home he went at a headlong pace and rushed into his mother's drawing-room where she was quietly reading.

"Mother, mother, such news!" he exclaimed. "These people are old friends, at least Mrs. Clancy is, she knew you and father, and recognized me by my likeness to my father, particularly the bit of white hair; how lucky I would never have that tampered with."

"But I never knew a Mrs. Clancy," replied Mrs. Meredith. "Do sit down, my son, and try not to be so much excited. Tell me all about it."

"Her name was Hester Belle."

"Hester Belle!" cried Mrs. Meredith. "Are you sure? and do you really think she would care to see me?"

"I am sure of it, mother; why not? She said you were old school friends."

"Oh, John," replied his mother, "I robbed her of her lover, your father; and I set myself to do it one Christmas Eve that a party of us went to the

Mammoth Cave in old Kentucky. Can she forgive me?"

"She seems to forget all about it," said John. "She married, you know, and has a fine family; at any rate I am glad she did not marry my father, for, dear mother, I mean to have her daughter for my wife if I can win her."

"God grant it," replied his mother. "You must come home early to-morrow afternoon and take me to see my dear Hester. I long to see her and have her again for my friend. If her daughter be anything like her you will be most fortunate in having her for your wife."

The mother and son sat up late talking it all over, and John told her what he knew of the Clancy's, how George wanted to be a priest, and the hopes and ambitions of the younger ones, while Hester was book-keeper and secretary for Darch & Darch.

"Poor little girl," said Mrs. Meredith. "You must hurry with your wooing, John; I don't like to have her working so hard."

"You may be sure I shall need no urging, mother. I don't like to have her in that office either."

The next morning before going to his office John ran around to tell Mrs. Clancy that his mother would call upon her that afternoon. The poor lady was in a flutter of nervousness all day.

"She will find things greatly changed with me," she thought.

About three o'clock John went home, and shortly after walked with his mother to the obscure street where the Clancys lived. When they reached the

door Mrs. Meredith said: "I would rather go in alone, dear; you can come back for me in about an hour."

"I must go down town, mother, and meet Hester and come back with her."

"Very well, my son, do so. You are not solely your mother's knight now; I relinquish you to this little Hester."

All the same she gave a sigh as she pulled the door bell.

Bill opened the door, and with all the politeness of his fourteen years, showed Mrs. Meredith into the parlor. Mrs. Clancy was there waiting for her. As they advanced towards one another each opened her arms, and with the exclamation "Hester!!" "Lucy!" they embraced, then held each other off to examine the features.

"Time has dealt gently with you, Lucy," said Mrs. Clancy. "You are as beautiful as ever and as stately."

"And you, Hester, are the same pretty, graceful, timid little darling you ever were. Are you really going to be my friend again, dear Hester; have you forgiven me?"

"Quite, my dear Lucy; I would not have things other than they were. My first girlish fancy was but a fancy; my vanity was hurt more than my heart. I truly loved my dear husband; look at his portrait and see whether he was not a handsome man," showing a fine painting of him that hung upon the wall.

"What a magnificent man, Hester!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Clancy, "and he was as good as he looks; he was very good to me always, although he did not leave me well off. How is it you came to Toronto, Lucy?"

"My husband died when John was only twelve, and I could not bear Kentucky any more. I did not care for the Eastern States, so I came to Toronto and made my home here. I want to see all your children, Hester."

"Mollie and Bill are at home, as they have their holidays now, and I expect George at any moment. Poor Hester has no holidays, so she will not be home until nearly six."

"Hester," said Mrs. Meredith, "John told me last evening that he intends to try and win your Hester for his wife. I hope you will not object, for he is a dear, good boy, and will make the best of husbands."

"I shall not object, dear Lucy; it will rest with herself."

"Then do not tell her; let John do his own wooing. Now, Hester, there is one other matter I want to speak of before we have the children in. John told me that George wishes to be a priest. I have long desired to adopt a boy to educate him for the priesthood; why not let me do this for your son?"

"Oh, but, Lucy!" began Mrs. Clancy.

"Now, listen, Hester. It would be a great happiness to me if you will allow this, for I have so much desired to do such a thing since my own boy had no vocation, and I have but one son."

"It is very good of you, Lucy; shall we talk it

over again? for I hear George, and the children are coming in.”

So Mrs. Meredith made the acquaintance of her old friend's children, and before she had finished talking to them, Hester and John arrived, and she was charmed by the pretty girl who had captured her son.

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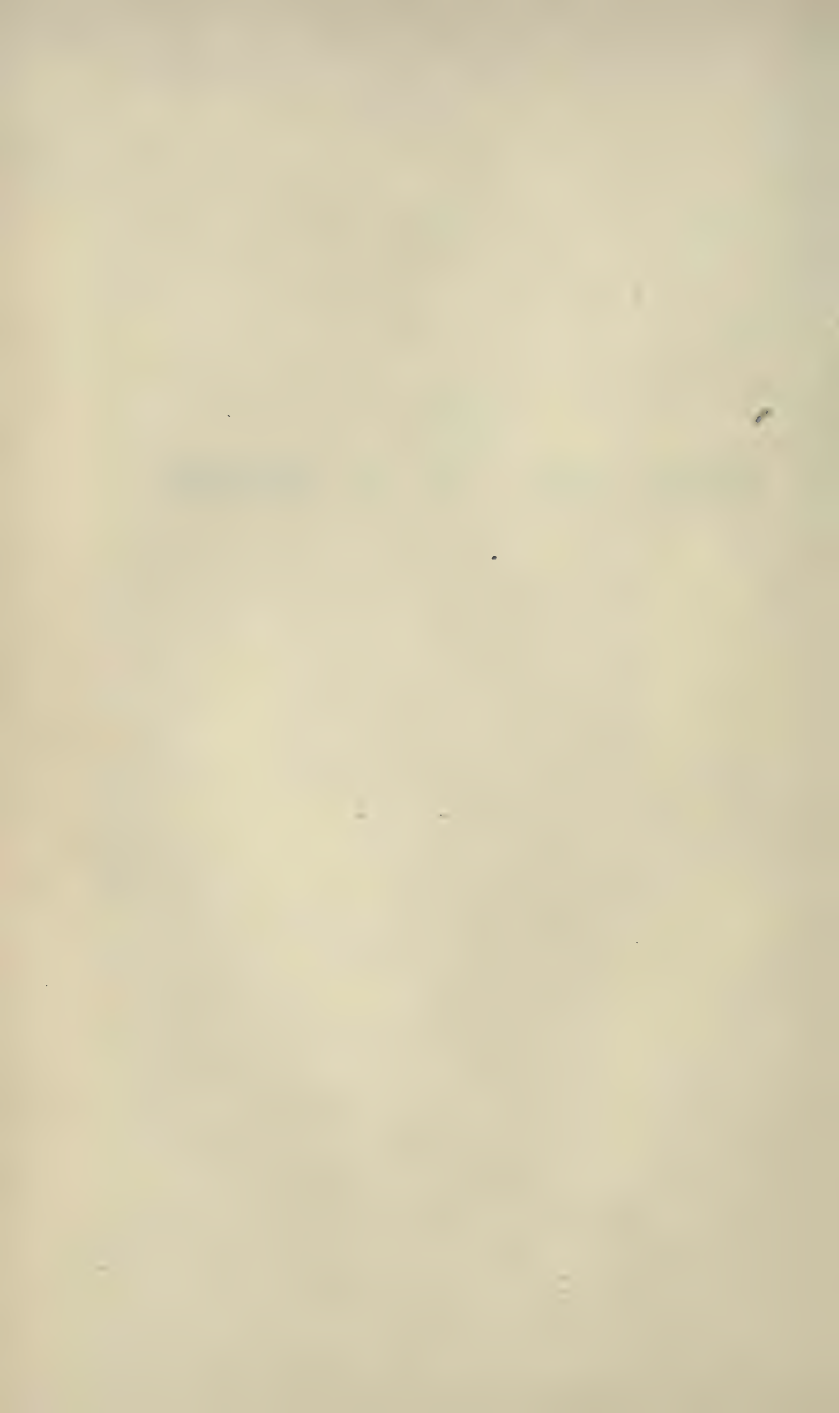
There remains little to be told; the love-making progressed as love-making has ever done since the foundation of the world. In this case the course of true love ran pretty smoothly. The parents were ready to help it along, and John had not too hard a time to persuade Hester that in making him happy she would ensure her own happiness.

They were married last spring, and Mollie was wild with delight at being the only bridesmaid, while George was a dignified and happy best man.

The young Mrs. Meredith is going to have the family Christmas dinner this year in her own pretty house on the right side of Parkdale, where she will entertain her husband's mother, her own mother, and her sister and brothers. George is coming up from Montreal for the occasion. He is now a student at the Jesuit College.



THE
MESSAGE OF A ROSE



CHAPTER I.

In the early sixties, Toronto's suburbs sat more snugly around the city than they do now. One by one, in the growth of our beautiful town, these old-time outskirts have been drawn into the parent corporation and lost in the maze and whirl of city advantages; waterworks, improved drainage, gas and —taxes. Other suburbs there are to be sure, but they seem to be further away, to be more stand-off and to pride themselves upon their suburban advantages as opposed to those the city can offer them.

In one of those by-gone suburbs to the west of Toronto, there used to stand a pretty, rose-clad cottage, surrounded by a couple of acres in garden and lawn. The house stood some distance back from the street, and was approached through an avenue of fine old elms. Mr. Sydney, proprietor of this picturesque spot, was a successful lawyer in a quiet, unobtrusive way; he had not enough of what we call "go" in him to make a noise in the world, therefore, he never became eminent; but, being a good business man and attentive to the interests of his clients, he was fairly well off at the time our story opens. He drove his own high buggy every day into town, and used to put up "Old Dan" at the "Bay Horse" hotel,

never dreaming of the day when electric cars would be rushing by his very door.

One day towards the end of August, Mrs. Sydney and her only daughter, Ada, sat out on the lawn where they had a view down the elm avenue, to watch for the return of the husband and father. Mrs. Sydney was a little over forty, and was "fair," if not "fat." She had lost none of her early beauty, which was rather enhanced by the gentle dignity of her mature years. Ada, a bright, happy girl of fifteen, resembled her mother in form and feature, though her expression was wanting in that thoughtfulness which was such a charm in Mrs. Sydney. The two sons, Harry and Jack, aged respectively nineteen and seventeen, were expected to return from town with their father. Harry had entered upon his course of law in his father's office. Jack was to leave for Montreal with Ada on the next day, to resume his duties at the Jesuit College, while his sister returned to "Ville Marie."

"How short the holidays are, mamma," said Ada, as she sat on the grass nursing her knees. "I thought when I came home in July that I had such a long time before me, now it is all over, and to-morrow I leave home again for so many long, long months!"

"Time always seems longer in anticipation than in realization, as you will know for yourself some day, my little girl; but, Ada, you speak of your school term as long, long months; do you find them weary also, do they not fly quickly when you have fairly entered upon your work? Are you not happy at the Convent?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, dear mamma," cried Ada eagerly; "last year the time sped away almost as quickly as my holidays, but it seems a long, dreary time to look forward until Christmas before I can see you all again. Jack can come but once a month to see me; I can't help feeling lonely sometimes. And you, mamma, do you not sometimes feel lonely when papa and Harry are in town, and you are out here all alone, particularly in winter?"

And Ada nestled closer to her mother, laying her head upon her knee.

For answer, Mrs. Sydney placed her hand fondly upon her daughter's curly head, while a tear stole down her cheek.

After a short silence Ada raised her head and gazed towards their pretty dwelling; the front of the house was almost entirely covered with a climbing rose from which hung clusters of blush-colored blossoms. The original vine had been planted on the right side of the house and had mounted almost to the roof. The stock was nearly as large as a tree. On the other side of the house a slip had been planted which was also flourishing, and already peeping into the dining-room windows.

"I shall never forget our lovely roses," said Ada, her eyes still resting upon them. "Nowhere have I seen such roses; others look so stunted and meagre, while ours are so full and perfect! The roses always bring my home before me. I never think of one but I see the other."

"My dear child," replied Mrs. Sydney, "your father planted that rose the day you were born. It

was a lovely May day that Our Lady gave me my little daughter. That year we had such an early, mild spring, and the young plant thrived under the special care your father gave it. This seems an aspect favorable to roses; that slip you planted last year near the summer house is doing well."

"Oh, yes! I went to look at it this morning," exclaimed Ada, "and it looks quite healthy. I should not wonder if it bore flowers next summer. That rose seems to bear planting at any season of the year. I so well remember; do you remember, mamma, my helping papa to plant it on the left side of the house on the fifteenth of August, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, three years ago? That was just before I went to the Convent for the first time."

"I remember it well, my dear, and I trust the flourishing condition it is in is a sign that our Blessed Lady accepted my little girl's simple act of piety. I hope, my daughter, that love for our Virgin Mother will flourish as steadily in your heart as the rose you planted in her honor."

"I hope so, mamma," and Ada's head once more sought her mother's knee. "I love to think of the Blessed Virgin's roses, and hope she will accept them as my Rosary."

"You leave me to-morrow, my dear child, for several months," said Mrs. Sydney, after a silence; "don't forget the advice I have given you in the last few days. I need not repeat it all, but here, in sight of the roses which remind you of so much, let me impress upon you to be faithful in your devotion to the Blessed Virgin, who has always protected you

in a special manner; above all, cultivate a love for the Rosary which is so dear to her; try, if possible, to say it every day, then I shall have no fear for my little daughter."

"I promise, mamma," fervently responded Ada, "in future, my roseclad home, and you, dear mamma, and my Mother in Heaven, will all form one picture in my mind. I shall love my Rosary, which will remind me of the roses I planted on Our Lady's Feast."

Silence then fell upon the mother and daughter, which was not broken until the sound of wheels warned them of the approach of the gentlemen.

Mr. Sidney, a handsome man in the prime of life, and his two fine-looking sons, alighted and came towards Mrs. Sydney and Ada.

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed the latter, as she ran to meet her father, "This is our last evening all together!"

Mr. Sydney folded his daughter in his arms, pressing his lips to her hair, saying:

"Our last for several months, dearest, but I trust not our very last."

Then he showed the tickets for the boat at two o'clock on the next day. Jack and Ada were to go alone, as Jack was considered old enough now to take care of his sister. Arrangements had been made for the baggage to go the next morning, and the boys were to drive to the boat in Mr. Sydney's buggy, while Mr. and Mrs. Sydney and Ada would go in the carriage.

CHAPTER II.

Early the next morning Ada was abroad, visiting all her favorite spots for the last time. She wept over the slip she had planted by the summer-house, caressed the roses clustered about the house as though they were living things, and renewed the promises made the evening before to her mother.

The last thing before leaving, she gathered a bunch of roses to carry with her. One, more reluctant than the others, was secured by letting it drag with it a large portion of the parent stem.

"See, mamma," she cried, "I believe that would grow if it were planted, it is really a slip. However, it will last all the longer," and she fastened it securely to her belt.

Many friends were at the boat to see the young people off, for the Sydneys were great favorites, and Ada had won the love of a wide circle by her bright, happy ways.

The boat swings towards the gap, and Mrs. Sydney's longing eyes gaze fondly on Ada, who waves a large bunch of roses aloft, while a solitary rose with a very long stem is fastened in her belt.

It is not necessary to tell how Ada broke down and wept once she was out of sight of the loved

faces, how Jack could not comfort her, for the lump in his own throat.

The next morning Ada was on deck shortly after the boat steamed out of Kingston, feasting her eyes again on the enchanting scenery as they passed through the Thousand Islands. A few of her roses were fastened into her dress; the one with the long stem she carried.

Jack soon joined his sister. Being enthusiastically fond of nature, they sat leaning over the railing, gazing with untiring admiration on the changing panorama. A little below Alexandria Bay, Ada suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, look, Jack! is not that a perfect picture!" They were passing where, between two islands, they caught a glimpse further on of another island superbly wooded, sloping gently down to the water's edge.

"That's the island I would choose for a summer residence," said Ada, "what a lovely spot it would be, and there, just at the point we can see from here, I would have an arbor. But—oh, Jack! my rose! I've dropped it, the one with the long stem; there it is in the water, poor little rose!"

"I see it," said Jack, "and it is being finely tossed about, too; there it is now, bearing away from the boat, but you have plenty of others."

"Yes, but I wanted that one particularly; I ought to have left it in the state-room."

Our young travellers reached Montreal between half-past six and seven that evening. Jack drove to Ville Marie with Ada, and left her with the good Sisters before going to the College.

Ada's spirits revived considerably as she greeted her dear teachers and school-fellows, for whom she entertained a sincere affection. In a few days she had settled down to the old routine, and the weeks sped happily away.

At the end of November she began to look forward to the near approach of Christmas, when she would see the loved ones at home again, and spend two happy weeks with them.

One morning, just as the girls were going to class, the Rev. Mother sent for Ada; she desired to see her in her own little private office. Ada went wonderingly; she knew she had done nothing lately to deserve a scolding; what, then, could be the meaning of the summons?

When Ada saw the Rev. Mother's face she knew no scolding was pending; a look of infinite pity and sadness was there, and tears were in her eyes; a telegram lay upon the desk.

The nun put her arms around the young girl and held her close. A bitterly hard task was before her—how was she to tell this loving daughter that her mother, whom she expected to see in a few weeks, had answered the Master's call—that never again in this life would they meet in fond embrace? Ada's mother was dead!

Poor Ada! at first stunned, she could not understand; then when all the bitterness of the truth forced itself upon her, she flung herself upon the floor, face downwards, and gave herself up to an abandonment of grief. Gently the Mother raised her, and helped her to a sofa, sitting down beside

her, holding her hand tightly in her own. She allowed the sorrow-stricken girl to give full vent to her tears, and for the time offered no words of consolation, knowing full well that the over-burdened heart must find relief in nature's own way.

The telegram announced that Mrs. Sydney had died the night before of pneumonia, that her children were not to come home. A letter received the next day stated that less than a week before Mrs. Sydney had contracted a cold which at first did not appear serious, but on Wednesday morning pneumonia had set in, and before the distracted husband could realize the danger, or send for the children, all hope was over—she died that night.

Mr. Sydney went to Montreal a few days after the funeral and spent a week with his heart-broken children; he decided that they were not to go home at Christmas; he intended as soon as possible to sell the place and move into town; he could not bear to live there any longer.

This he accomplished in a short time, buying a pretty little house on Sherbourne Street, where he and Harry set up their sad housekeeping. The faithful old cook was installed as house-keeper.

Sherbourne Street was not in those days the busy scene of traffic it is now. It was almost like the country; there was no sidewalk at the upper end, and the houses were scattered here and there, with vacant spaces between.

Here Mr. Sydney and Harry lived alone for over two years; Jack and Ada were not brought home for the vacations, but twice a year their father and

brother went to Montreal and took them for a trip, giving them what pleasure they could under the altered circumstances.

Ada's school days passed quietly and happily; she was a general favorite with nuns and pupils, and fairly successful in her studies. When she was eighteen she graduated, and Mr. Sydney went down to bring home his little housekeeper.

They came up in the boat, as Ada wanted to pass the Thousand Islands again. The whole family were on board, and Ada looked out eagerly for the island that had so taken her fancy nearly three years before.

"There it is, papa!" she exclaimed, as they came in sight, "do you see, away off between those two islands, that lovely one so sheltered and almost hidden away?"

"I see it, my dear; it is indeed an enchanting scene."

"Oh, papa, dearest, you must buy that island some day when you are rich; how lovely it would be to spend the summer there."

Mr. Sydney smiled indulgently upon his enthusiastic daughter. "We shall see, Ada, perhaps some day, as you say, I may be able to indulge your fancy."

Ada was content to spend the summer quietly at home, "setting things to rights" in the Sherbourne Street house. She was very pensive; it was all so new to her, so different from the home-coming she had pictured to herself when she left Toronto nearly

three years before. Often the sweet face of her mother, as she looked on the evening of their last talk, before the rose-clad cottage, came to her. Then she would picture the whole scene, and see the clusters of roses hanging in rich bloom over the house that had sheltered her childhood. But she had no wish to visit the old place again.

CHAPTER III.

However, Ada was young, and when winter came, and some old friends of her mother offered to chaperone her, she entered with all the zest of youth into the gaities of the season. Those who remember the whirl of pleasure which carried the belles of Toronto round in a constant maze during the days of the military, will know that there was not much leisure for reflection. The red-coats were everywhere; and everywhere they were welcome. Balls, private theatricals, sleighing parties, followed one another in mad haste, as though fearful of allowing a moment's repose, or time for thought.

More than one gay officer laid his homage at the feet of pretty, sprightly Miss Sydney, with an eye also, no doubt, to the father's comfortable thousands. But as yet her heart was untouched, not even the handsome uniform of the 13th Hussars could move her.

For two years our heroine kept guard over her heart, then she found, to her dismay, that it had gone out of her keeping. A rising young lawyer, about five years her senior, who for six months had silently, but constantly "paid her his court," had carried the fortress.

Arthur Burton was a man of great determination, and quiet, steady perseverance. He had set himself to win Ada Sydney, whom he loved with all the strength of his determined nature. He expected opposition both from herself and her family, as he was a Protestant, and as unyielding in that, as in everything else. But he felt if he could win her love, he could bear down all opposition.

Ada loved him. Though she had a vague dread of a mixed marriage, she knew in her heart that her lover's entreaties would eventually prevail. Her life during the past two years had not tended to strengthen her character to meet a crisis like this. She had been accustomed to have her own way in everything; and the giddy round of pleasures, which had left no time for serious reflection, had weakened her taste for prayer. Her mother's advice had become dim, and alas! her promises to her mother had of late been sadly neglected; her rosary was for the most part forgotten, and religion had become a matter for Sundays only.

Mr. Sydney positively refused to entertain Arthur Burton's suit, the latter having declined to make the necessary concessions. But he could wait; he felt sure of Ada.

And his perseverance was rewarded. After two struggling years with her heart, Ada, who was then a little over twenty-two years of age, left her father's house to meet Arthur Burton, and they were married by a magistrate.

Mr. Sydney was heart-broken, but, on the return of his daughter and her husband to Toronto

two months later, he concluded to make the best of the matter, and received her. It was long, however, before she was reconciled to the Church.

Young Mrs. Burton seemed the gayest of the gay; her house was the centre of fashion and amusement, and Arthur was very proud of his pretty wife. Things went on merrily for five years, when Arthur died, leaving Ada one little girl scarcely four years old. The young widow returned to her father's house, where she resumed the post of housekeeper; Jack was still at home; Harry had married a good Catholic.

Mr. Sydney was glad to have his daughter home again, and hoped soon to see her seek consolation in the faithful practice of her religion. Her little child was baptized, and named Mary, after Ada's mother; Arthur Burton had not allowed his child to be baptized as a Catholic.

Ada resumed her Catholic duties to a certain extent, but the piety of her childhood seemed dead; it had been frozen during her married life; and now she was absorbed in her grief and overwhelmed with the loss of the husband she had idolized.

About this time Mr. Sydney remembered the half promise he had made to Ada years ago to buy one of the Thousand Islands for a summer residence. He at once set about making the purchase, and was so fortunate as to procure the very island his daughter had so much admired. He said nothing to Ada, desiring to give her a surprise. A pretty residence was soon erected and everything prepared for occupation about a year after the death of Ada's hus-

band. Then one day early in June Mr. Sydney said :

“Do you remember, Ada, a pretty island in the St. Lawrence you once admired so much?”

“Oh, yes, papa, I remember it very well; I think it the most beautiful spot I ever saw.”

Mr. Sydney laid a formidable looking document before his daughter, saying :

“Here is the deed of that island made out in your favor; there is a home upon it ready for occupation, and you may go as soon as you please to take possession of your kingdom, for you are its queen.”

“Oh, papa!” said Ada, bursting into tears, “how good you are to me, and I have deserved so little.” Then flinging her arms around her father’s neck, “How soon may we go papa? I long to be in a quiet place. Oh, how peaceful it will be there!”

“Just as soon as you can get ready; you and I and Mary will go first; then, when things are settled, Jack and Harry and his wife can follow. I intend to spend all the summer there.”

CHAPTER IV.

Not many days after the above conversation, Ada found her childhood's dream realized, and she was on her favorite island. It was about three acres in extent, with a pretty snow-white house in the middle on a slight elevation.

On the morning after their arrival, Ada, taking little Mary with her, went to explore her domain. She wandered down towards the water's edge, seeking the spot she had seen from the boat, where she thought she would like to build an arbor. Mary ran on before her, flitting here and there, gathering wild flowers; suddenly, as they neared the water, Mary exclaimed:

"Oh, mamma, mamma, come here quick, look at all the lovely pink flowers spreading around everywhere. Oh! such a lot, but they are near the water and I am afraid to go for them; do come, mamma, quick, quick!"

Urged by Mary's impatient voice, Ada hastened her steps; and, as she looked over the low bank, what a scene met her eyes. Spread out before her like a carpet, from the spot where she stood, sloping down to the water's edge, were countless clusters of delicate blush roses; not the wild roses one might

expect to find in nature's garden, but full, rich, fragrant blossoms. A climbing rose was here, trailing over the ground; one branch had reached a tree, and had run up part way, whence it hung in graceful festoons.

Ada stood rooted to the spot; as she gazed upon those roses a panic seized her soul, the flood-gates of memory were opened; her mother's voice sounded in her ears; that loved mother, whose admonitions she had neglected, her promises to whom she had so totally forgotten.

Little Mary looked with wonder at her mother. Finally, plucking her dress, she said:

"Mamma, what is the matter? Why don't you get some pretty flowers?"

"Run back to the house, darling," said Ada with an effort, "and stay with Annie; here, dear, take these roses with you, and you and Annie can arrange them in some vases; mamma will come back presently."

As soon as the little one was out of sight Ada sank upon her knees in the midst of the roses, and with clasped hands she raised her tearful eyes to heaven, sobbing:

"O my God, I thank Thee that Thou has awakened my dormant soul. Hast Thou sent these roses to me out of Heaven? Hast Thou worked a miracle in my favour? I can't understand it," she added in an awe-stricken whisper.

She sat down, surrounded by these mementos of her childhood, and sadly reviewed her wasted life. One by one, she went over her failings; how she had

disobeyed her father and the Church in her marriage; how utterly she had neglected her religious duties; how she had forgotten God in her idolatrous love; how she had—oh, bitter thought—how she had forgotten the promises made to her darling mother in sight of just such roses as these. She seemed to hear her mother's voice—

“Here in presence of these roses which remind you of so much, promise me to be faithful to the Blessed Virgin, and to say her Rosary every day.”

“I promise, mamma,” she heard herself saying.

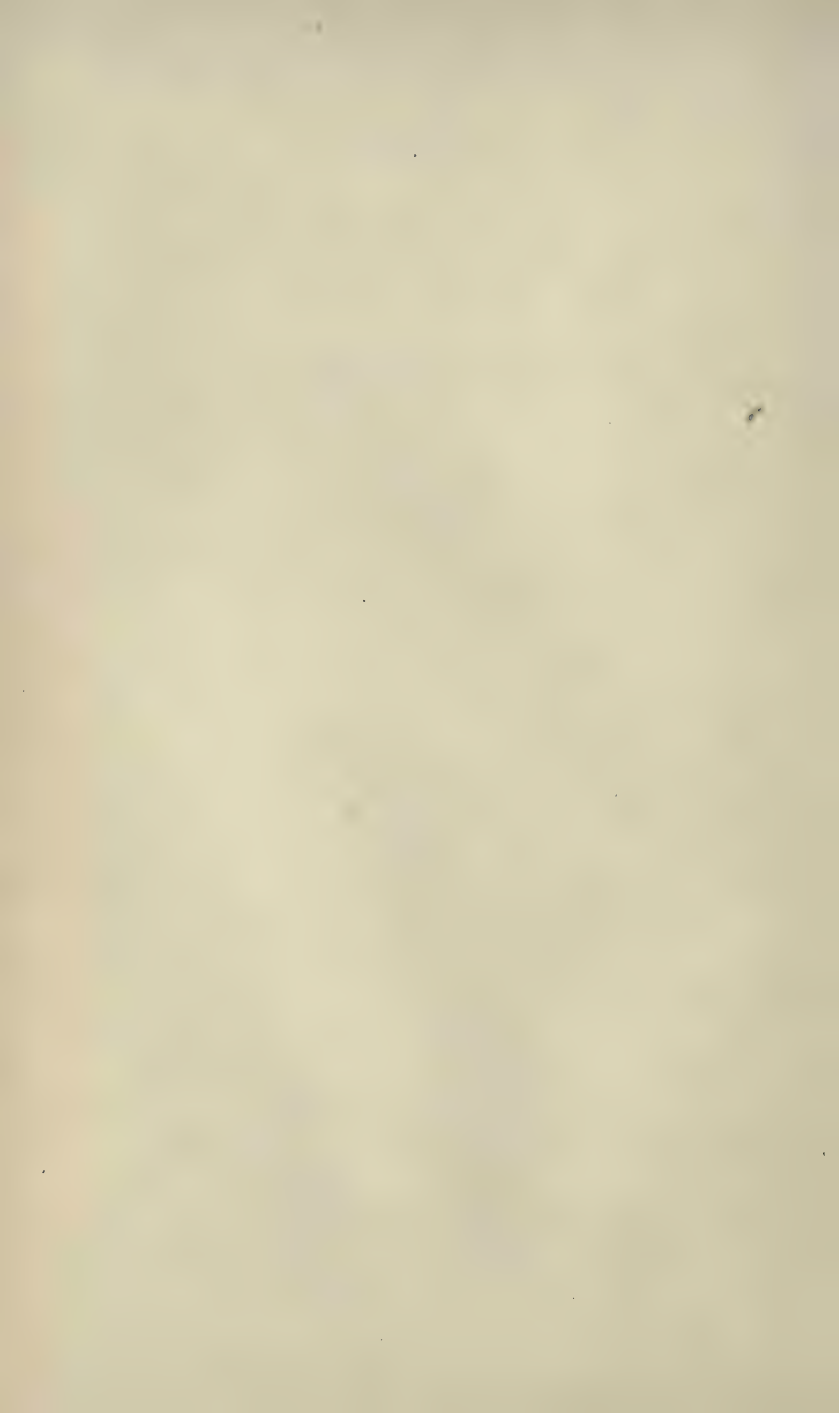
And what had become of these promises? Where was her Rosary? Ada's head sank upon her breast and she wept bitter tears of sorrow and repentance. By and by she became calmer as she remembered her early teaching and knew that God, Who is infinitely merciful and forgiving, would accept her penitence and admit her again into His love. She rose to her knees, saying:

“Forgive me, O my God, I have been negligent, but I will begin at once to serve Thee. I deserve nothing at Thy hands; I have wasted my life, and turned away from Thy love; I have foiled my own foolish will and broken all my promises. But Thou art full of pity and love; Thou wilt look with compassion upon my repentant heart and hear my prayer for pardon. Blessed Mother Mary, help me to be faithful to the promises I made so long ago, and which I now renew.

“O mamma, you are in Heaven with God and our Blessed Mother, help your erring daughter.

“I promise, mamma—I promise”

GOD'S CALL



CHAPTER I.

Boom! Boom!! tolled the deep-throated bell. The great Cathedral was packed to the doors. The sanctuary was filled with surpliced priests, with Monsignori and Bishops in purple, and one Archbishop. The altar and sanctuary and vast cathedral were heavily draped in purple. The celebrant, with deacon and sub-deacon, was at the foot of the altar; the beautiful organ broke out in a sad, wailing strain. The Mass of Requiem was about to begin for the beloved Bishop who, having attained his three-score years and ten, had laid down the burden of a life well spent in the service of his Master, and had gone to that reward he so richly deserved.

No one observed the aged woman who sat far back in a side aisle clad in deep mourning. She wept, but all around her wept also, and if her tears seemed more bitter, as though forced from her by a great personal sorrow, none noticed.

She had come early to the church, and, standing by the bier, had gazed with ineffable sorrow, yet with resignation, at the calm and holy features of the dead Bishop; then she had to make room for others who were crowding up; his own people, who desired to take a farewell look at their beloved Bishop; she was a stranger and people wondered

why she should so long monopolize the best place.

She moved away and took a seat far down in a side aisle; and now Mass was going on, she tried to pray, but could only weep.

The preacher ascends the pulpit, a bishop of great renown from a far-away diocese. He tells of the holy life, of the zeal of the prelate who lies dead in their midst. Of his early days of hardships when he was a young missionary. Of his fame later on as a preacher, of his success as a pastor, and finally of his forty-four years of priesthood, for twenty of which he had been the zealous and beloved bishop of this diocese.

But what does the preacher say now?—"From his tenderest years he heard the voice of his Master calling him; from his boyhood he had consecrated himself to God by an earnest desire to become a priest."

Ah! no one in that vast concourse, no one in all the wide world but that sweet-faced, sorrowful-looking woman, bent with years and patient suffering, knew of the sacrifice two loving hearts made nigh upon half a century ago. And she alone, as usually falls to the lot of women, had borne the weight of that sacrifice through all these long, weary years; patiently and lovingly had she borne it, and she felt that her sacrifice had been as agreeable to God as his. But she must not allow her mind to dwell upon this now; she must listen to the concluding words of praise of the long life now ended. Then followed that grand "Libera." Then the long line of priests and bishops filed slowly down the aisle.

She watched while they closed the coffin, and that, too, was borne by grave-looking priests; and for the last time the dear Bishop, whom all loved so well, passed through his Cathedral.

She waited until the people had all gone out, then she advanced to the sanctuary and knelt for a moment on the spot where the coffin had rested, and followed the others from the church.

She had a carriage waiting for her, a small, closed coupe; as she entered she instructed the coachman to wait until all the carriages had started, then follow the last of all.

A long drive of over five miles to the cemetery at a slow pace, would give her time for the reverie she felt she must now allow herself.

Her memory carried her back over sixty years. She saw herself a little, romping school-girl, the youngest of the family, with two sisters and one brother. They lived in a village, her father was one of the two doctors, the other doctor had one son and one little daughter. She saw Arthur, who was only one year her senior, a bright and handsome boy.

The children of the two doctors usually met on their way to the village school. Arthur and Miriam always scampered on ahead of the others, while Miriam's sisters took care of Arthur's little sister. Together they studied, helping and encouraging each other; and, on their way home from school they never failed to make their visit in the little church, to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin.

In holiday time they went to picnics and berrying and fern-gathering with all the other children, but always found a few minutes for a little conversation together.

They made their first Holy Communion and were confirmed at the same time. Together they entered the High School when their course at the Village School was over; and Miriam kept up bravely with Arthur, though she was a year younger. At length, when Arthur was eighteen and Miriam seventeen, they matriculated. That summer they rested completely from books during the holidays, for they had worked hard. They enjoyed all the simple pleasures of village and country life.

The last day of August arrived, and on the morrow Arthur was to go to a Catholic college in a distant city. They sat on the lawn by Miriam's home. The other brother and sisters, with a few intimate friends, were scattered here and there in their favorite nooks. Arthur and Miriam were holding their last conference, interchanging their last confidences.

"I am going to be a lawyer," declared Arthur, "that is above all things what I should like. I feel it in me, some way, that I shall be able to stand up before judge and jury and argue my case. I should like to succor the oppressed, to see justice always done; there are some things I know of that I should like to see set right."

And like many another young man on the threshold of life, he hoped to be able to set this old world on a new footing.

"I know, Arthur," Miriam replied, "that you will do great things; you will achieve renown; I shall see you a judge some day, and your judgments will always be wise and just."

"For four years I must work hard for my degree of B.A.," said Arthur, "my studies will always tend, of course, towards the profession I have chosen. I shall then be twenty-two, and my law course will take another three years; then I shall be equipped to face the world."

Silence fell between them for a short space, while they looked about to see what the others were doing. Some were reading, some walking, and others enjoying a merry game. Arthur broke the silence, saying:

"This is the first time since I can remember that we have been separated. I shall miss you. I don't know how I am going to study without your help and encouragement. And what about your studies? Are you going to give it all up now?"

"I shall read, Arthur, and you must write me from College and direct me and tell me what to read. Then I am going to learn house-keeping and sewing; mother says I must, so does father, too, for the matter of that; he says a woman should know how to sew and direct the management of her house."

"He is right, too, I suppose," Arthur replied, "but you must keep up your reading; you are only seventeen, and have plenty of time before you to learn housekeeping and all that, and cultivate your mind as well. And, Miriam, there is another thing

I must say before we part. I cannot imagine my life without you; we have always been so much to each other. If I am to achieve greatness, as you predict, you must share it with me; and while you are learning housekeeping and I studying law, we must both look forward to the time when you shall keep the house I hope to provide for you. Can you wait so long for me, Miriam?"

Miriam hung her head and quick blushes chased one another over her pretty face, for the first time in her young life she could not raise her eyes to meet Arthur's, nor could she control her lips to frame a reply. Arthur bent towards her.

"Tell me, Miriam, can you wait so long?"

"I can wait, Arthur," she managed to stammer, "we are both young enough to wait; in ten years we shall still be young."

"It's a bargain, then, Miriam," returned Arthur. "I shall be encouraged in my work, and it will not be long to Christmas, when I shall come home for a few days, for I must not fail to serve at midnight Mass for dear old Father Graham; and we can write as often as the college rules allow."

This was the simple love-making of these two innocent hearts.

CHAPTER II.

Arthur came at Christmas, and again for a longer stay during the summer vacation, when there were walks and talks on college life, on studies, or plans for future ambitions. Miriam showed her sewing and made cakes when Arthur came to tea; she also talked over with him the books she had been reading and confided to him that she was trying a little literary work herself. Arthur was delighted at this, and, after reading some of her productions, encouraged her to persevere, telling her how she could get her stories published.

So the four years went by, and one day the news was flashed by telegraph that Arthur had won his B.A. with honors. His sister came running up to tell Miriam, and together they rejoiced. The next day he came home, late in the evening, and Miriam had to wait until morning to see him. He was at Mass and served Father Graham. He came out of the church after Mass just for one moment and gave Miriam time to congratulate him. He seemed grave, but she attributed that to his thinking of the great career he was now going to take up in earnest.

"I am going to have a talk with Father Graham," he said, "and after I breakfast I shall come up to see you."

"Very well," Miriam replied. She felt disappointed, but whatever Arthur did was, of course, right.

When Arthur arrived at Miriam's home he had to receive the congratulations of her father and mother; the sisters were married and gone to distant homes, and the brother was making his fortune in a large city.

At length Arthur and Miriam were free to seek their favorite spot on the lawn. After a brief silence Arthur began:

"Miriam, I have something so very serious to say that I hardly know how to begin. Father Graham says 'I must tell you at once, even before my mother or father.'"

Miriam felt something grip her heart and a great fear fell upon her, but she spoke bravely.

"Surely, Arthur, you can speak to me freely, and need not hesitate about anything you have to say."

"This is very different to anything you ever heard me say before, Miriam, and is difficult to explain. A great change has come over me during this last year at college, ever since the Retreat in fact. My ambitions to make a great name in the world are all gone; my only ambition now is to save souls. Miriam, I want to be a priest."

The bolt had fallen. Miriam controlled herself, but she did not speak. Arthur continued:

"My director at college says I have a vocation; I wrote Father Graham. He replied that he would talk it over on my return, and this morning he told me that he thinks I have a call, but that it rests

with you. I am not unmindful, dear Miriam, of our promise, and I will not fail to redeem it if you say so; my affection for you is as great as it ever was, and I would not break my word unless you willingly release me. I know I am stumbling horribly over this, but do you not realize that it is a hard thing to have to say?"

Then Miriam burst out:

"What do you and Father Graham take me for? Do you suppose I would stand in the way of a vocation? I would be proud to see you a priest. Besides, Arthur," she continued with a whimsical smile, "affection in a husband would not satisfy me. I want something warmer than that. And, you know, we were only children when we talked over our plans, for we were never really engaged; so you are free to follow the vocation to which you feel called. I suppose we are brother and sister now, and I give you, my brother, with all my heart, to God's service. I shall be as proud of you some day when you are a Bishop as I would have been to see you a judge."

She spoke lightly, for he must never know how great a wrench this was to her, and well she knew that the sacrifice was all her own. A deep joy overspread Arthur's countenance as he said:

"God bless you, Miriam; you have made me very happy. I trust we shall always be the greatest friends."

"Of course, Arthur!" she replied cheerfully; but she knew how long that would last.

So Arthur went off to the Seminary in the autumn; he came home for a few days at Christmas, a grave young Seminarian.

Shortly after that his family moved away to a large town where the doctor acquired a good practice, and Arthur came to the village no more. The correspondence flagged; then dropped.

CHAPTER III.

And Miriam—did she become a sour, crabbed old maid? Not so, indeed. In a story book she would probably have been made a nun, a Sister of Charity, perhaps; but such was not her vocation. Yet she felt she could never marry. She devoted herself to the care of her parents. Her lessons in housekeeping proved useful, for, by degrees, she relieved her mother altogether of the cares of the house. Her knowledge of sewing she turned to good account by forming a Sewing Society to make clothing for the poor; and, as there were not many very poor in their village, they worked for poor missions. Her artistic tastes found an outlet in caring for the church and decorating the altars. The course of solid reading she had made helped her in her literary work; the many Catholic stories and magazine articles she wrote under a pen-name, which I may not reveal, won renown, if not fame. She wrote always under a pen-name in case Arthur should ever come across anything she wrote for Catholic magazines, and she would do nothing to remind him of her.

When troops of nieces and nephews came to spend their vacations in the roomy old homestead, she was ever the bright and cheerful aunt who lived her young days over again with them. In short, her

sacrifice, once made, was complete; there were no repinings, no regrets. On the day Arthur told her he wished to become a priest, after he had gone she fled to the church, and there, before the Blessed Sacrament, she offered her heart to God, and promised to spend her life in His service in whatever way He would show her. Her love for Arthur was sacred, she would never know another earthly love, but not even by the slightest thought would she tarnish his holy vocation; she gave him freely and willingly to God, and was happy and full of peace after she had made her oblation.

The years slipped speedily by; Miriam followed both father and mother to their peaceful graves in the village church-yard. Dear old Father Graham, full of years and honor, was soon after laid to rest in the midst of his beloved parishioners to whom he had ministered for over half a century. Nieces and nephews were grown up and married, and another generation of children came to visit Aunt Miriam whom everyone loved for her sweet and gentle kindness. Miriam's hair grew white, her form a little bent, yet she lost none of her cheerfulness.

In course of time her brothers and sisters died; and now none were left who knew her story; the younger generation had never heard it.

And what of Arthur? He never saw Miriam after the first year of his Seminary life. His was a true vocation, and he obeyed the call. The talents that he once thought to employ to win worldly renown, were now all given to God's service. He was a hard-working, zealous, young priest; he be-

came an eminent preacher, and, finally Bishop of an important diocese. He little knew how often Miriam had seen him, though herself unseen. She was present at his ordination; her father took her, and they kept well out of sight. Whenever she heard he was to preach on special occasions, she usually contrived to be present, and she was proud of his eloquence. She witnessed his consecration as Bishop, and thanked God Who had given him so sublime a vocation. The first time he gave Confirmation, she was in the church to see it. The railway journeys this entailed were nothing to her. Her heart was full of joy and exultation at the thought that her Arthur was doing God's work so nobly.

She had a cherished album into which she had pasted every scrap that had ever appeared about him in newspaper or magazine. And now he was dead, and she had followed him to the grave. She would take the first train that would carry her to her old village home; she felt that she might sing her "Nunc Dimitus." Her life-long prayer for him must now be changed to prayers for his soul which she was sure he would not require for long. She was tired and hoped God would soon allow her to lay down the burden.



THREE CHRISTMAS EVES



Dear old Quebec! Who that has ever seen the quaint old city can forget it? Who that has ever dwelt there but loves every crooked street, every rugged, break-neck pathway that serves to lead the unwary stranger in the opposite direction to that he set out for? Quebec, the picturesque, is never more beautiful than in winter when covered with her deep, thick mantle of snow. Piles upon piles of beautiful snow everywhere; on the streets, upon the houses, on the fences—where there are any; one might say over the fences, for they are frequently buried out of sight; on the river, up and down and away across to the other side, over the Citadel, down the sides of the rocks; and beyond, where the view is arrested by the mountains, nothing but snow, sparkling like diamonds under the winter sun. Nowhere is the cold so cheering and bracing; bright, clear, crisp, sunshiny cold. One loves to be out and feel the invigorating breath of a winter's morning, and hear the dry, powdery snow crunching under the feet.

On just such a morning as this Mary Dawson looked out of the window after breakfast, up and down St. Louis Street. The sun was tempting, the snow looked as though it would crunch beautifully, the cold was sharp and keen.

"This is Christmas Eve; I think I'll run up to see Katie Wilson, mother; she always goes to midnight Mass; they have it every year, you know, in the Catholic churches and convents. I have often thought I would like to go to the service at the Ursuline Convent. They say its beautiful there; the nuns and girls sing behind the grate; it must be lovely. If you don't want me this morning, mother, I'll run up and ask Katie to take me to-night. May I?"

"I don't want you particularly this morning, my dear," replied Mrs. Dawson, "but I hardly know what to say about your going to this midnight service, you are such an enthusiastic girl. What if you should be fascinated by these Catholic doings?"

Mary laughed a merry, light-hearted laugh.

"Mother, mother dear, what are you thinking of? I fascinated, or even yielding to fascination in matters of religion! No, no! I should want solid proof, and where can I find that but in my own faith, the Church of England? Katie Wilson is a dear, good girl, so is her brother Harry—well, of course, he isn't a girl; you know what I mean; you needn't laugh; I was going to say it's a pity Katie doesn't go to our church, she is so sweet and lovely. Well, may I go, mother?"

"I suppose so," answered her mother, "but if you go to this affair to-night, how will you get there and home so late?"

"Oh, that's easily managed, and quite proper, too, little mother. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson always go, I know, and as they have to pass here on the way to the convent, they can call for me going and leave

me returning, without going a step out of their way."

Mary Dawson was just twenty years of age; her birthday had been celebrated with great rejoicing on the 8th of December. Surely the Immaculate Mary would take this little namesake under her protection! Let us hope it was not merely a coincidence that she was born on that beautiful feast and named after the Queen of Heaven.

Mrs. Dawson had been a widow for five years. Mary, her youngest born, a married daughter living in Montreal, and three sons, constituted her family. Two of her sons were also in Montreal practising law, and the youngest, two years older than Mary, who had just taken his degree in medicine, was about to begin to practise in Quebec.

Mary was a gentle, amiable girl; she had been carefully brought up and educated chiefly at home by governesses. Mrs. Dawson had a dread and dislike of convents, and could not bear the thought of sending her little girl a distance to a Protestant school. Thus Mary knew very little of convents, which may seem strange for a Quebec girl.

Two years before she had formed a friendship with Katie Wilson, who was one year her junior, and who had been educated at the Ursuline Convent. Katie had but one brother—Harry—three years older than herself, upon whom she looked as her hero, and was proud to own him for her brother. He certainly was a fine, handsome young man, and as good as he looked; an earnest Catholic, attentive to all his duties, spiritual and otherwise. He had been

for about three months junior partner in a law firm.

At twenty minutes to twelve the Wilsons stopped before the Dawson house, and Mary, who had been watching for them, joined them noiselessly, for her mother and the rest had retired. The absent ones had come home that evening.

Their house was only five minutes' walk from the Convent; one is never far from anywhere in Quebec, so they were soon walking down Parloir Street, facing the ancient historic pile, which for over two centuries has sheltered the daughters of St. Ursula.

The church, which is devoted to the public, was very nearly filled when they entered, but Harry had gone early and secured a seat near the front for our party, on the right hand side, close to the grate, behind which is the nun's chapel, concealed usually from curious eyes by a curtain drawn across the grate. But Mary thought she could see the faces and white veils of one or two pupils, where the curtains gaped a little apart, as she looked curiously over, while her friends were engaged at their devotions.

How she longed to have a peep into that mysterious interior; she wondered what they looked like, those black-robed nuns and young girls hidden away behind that jealous grate and curtain. Good breeding forbade her to gaze long at that division in the curtains, though she felt sure if she craned her neck ever so little she could see farther into the chapel; but she must restrain herself; perhaps the curtains

would be drawn aside some time during the services.

What a quaint old church it was; plain, with no pretension to architectural beauty. How fat and puffy were those angels' faces looking down with bulging eyes from cornices and ceiling.

Montcalm was buried here, she had heard; how ancient it must all be. She wondered whether it was just as it used to be, were the walls and benches, the carved angels and the altar all the same? Ah, the altar, that was beautiful! Hundreds of lights, it appeared to the young girl, were reflected in the crystal and brightly burnished ornaments upon the altar. And what was the other altar to the left, facing the nuns' grate? It appeared to be beautifully decorated, but was not yet lit up, and a curtain concealed it from view. Was that the crib, she wondered; she had seen it once or twice in Catholic churches; this one must be beautiful.

Mary's eyes rested upon the congregation around her. How devout they all looked! How silent it was! The opening and closing of the door as people entered was done with as little noise as possible; no one seemed to speak, no one looked about. She glanced at her own friends; they were all occupied with their devotions; even Harry seemed to pay no attention to his surroundings, but had his eyes bent devoutly upon a prayer-book. The priest had not yet come out; the service had not commenced; how strange they should be all praying beforehand! Why was it? She saw no harm in sitting at ease and looking around a little if one were early for church,

or even a whispered word or two; though, of course, after the services had commenced, none would be more decorous and devout than was Mary Sunday after Sunday in their pew in the Anglican cathedral. Mary soon saw she was the only one gazing around, and immediately drew her eyes to the front.

On the stroke of midnight the priest entered, preceded by his acolytes. This was the white-haired, gentle-faced priest Mary had frequently seen passing their house. From her earliest childhood she remembered him, and had always been attracted by his kind, benevolent expression. Katie had often told her of dear Pere Le Moine, the chaplain at the convent, so beloved by the pupils.

There is a gentle rustle as all go on their knees; a faint rustle comes also from behind the grate. The priest stands at the foot of the altar and Mass begins.

It seemed a little tame at first to Mary; she could not understand what was going on, and wondered at those around her, whose devout attitudes and rapt attention showed a perfect comprehension and sympathy.

But, hark! what heavenly singing! Where does it come from? Mary could not refrain from looking up; there she saw, high above the heads of the people, a grate similar to the one below, but smaller. Evidently the organ loft was there, inside the cloister.

How exquisitely they sang! The children's choruses were enchanting. "Gloria in excelsis Deo!"

That must be a nun; what a voice! How sweet! how lovely! "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" Mary was herself a sweet singer and enthusiastic about music.

By and bye a little bell is rung at the foot of the altar; the silence becomes, if possible, more intense; a devout look of expectancy is upon every countenance. Mary remains seated, but attentive. She fancies she hears a little motion behind the curtains; they seem to shake a little. Ah! they are drawn slowly apart. Mary can see a veiled nun kneeling beside the curtain; before she can look further the little bell rings again, and instantly every head is bowed. As Mary looks now upon the chapel, she sees row upon row of benches occupied by pupils, but all are bowed in adoration; she can see nothing but snowy billows of white veils; the stalls on each side of the chapel are occupied by the nuns, who are also bending low, their veils concealing them completely from Mary's curious eyes. She turns to look at the worshippers around; they are in the same attitude of adoration; a breathless silence reigns; every head but hers is bent. A feeling of loneliness, of desolation comes over her; she feels as though all had gone somewhere and left her behind. She looks at the altar. What is it? The gentle-faced priest she had so often seen was holding something aloft. A majesty, a dignity she had never before observed, seemed to invest him. What is it?

Mary sank upon her knees and bowed her head; she knew not why. A whisper came to her heart: "What if after all I should be wrong?" Oh! the

agony of that thought. "God help me! Can it be that this is truth, and I am outside the pale? O, God, no! This is only a temptation!"

While these thoughts were passing through her mind her exterior was calm; no one guessed her mental excitement. She continued to observe what was going on. After the elevation two acolytes approached the side altar, and while one lit the candles around the shrine, the other drew aside the screen which concealed the crib. A beautiful representation of the Infant Jesus lying in the manger was revealed; near by stood a statue of our Blessed Lady. Mary looked first at the sweet little Babe, then at the Mother, that dear Mother of Mercy and Love who was as yet a stranger to this other suffering Mary. As she gazed upon the tender countenance of that dear Mother she exclaimed: "O! if you have any power in heaven exert it for me now! I am so miserable!" She was conscious of a stir around her; people were advancing towards the Sanctuary railing; it was time to receive Holy Communion. It took a long while to administer Holy Communion there. First the priest went to the grate, where the nuns and pupils all received. Then he returned to the sanctuary railing, and nearly all the congregation went forward in turn. The Wilsons went, and Mary again felt left out. An intense longing to partake of that mystic Communion seized upon her. As she watched the priest passing down the line the same sensation she experienced at the Elevation came over her: "What is it?" she breathed. "My God, what is it?"

At length Mass was over; a few left at once, but nearly all remained for at least a quarter of an hour in silent adoration. Mary had time to compose herself; it would never do to let the Wilsons see her agitation. When they were outside Katie said:

“How did you like it, Mary?”

“Oh, it was beautiful!” answered Mary, drawing in her breath. “The singing was lovely; who sang that ‘Gloria in excelsis Deo?’”

“That was one of the nuns; has she not a beautiful voice?”

“Beautiful, indeed,” assented Mary. “I should like to learn that; but here we are at our door. Good-night, and thank you all.”

“Good morning, rather,” broke in Harry. “And Merry Christmas, Mary.”

“Merry Christmas, Harry,” sang out Mary as she disappeared.

* * * * *

A year had quickly rolled away. Christmas Eve had come around again; people were assembled for Midnight Mass in the church attached to the Ursuline Convent. The bench occupied by our friends last year has been secured by them again. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson are there, Katie, looking tearfully happy, Harry looking grave but evidently well pleased; and who is the maiden all in white enveloped in a cloudy veil? Can this be our Mary? Even so, this is Mary. No looking around now, no wondering what it all meant, no question, no doubt; nothing but joy—calm, sweet, heavenly joy.

It looks as though the little church would be

taxed to its utmost to-night, for all Quebec has heard that pretty, merry Mary Dawson was received into the Church that morning by Pere Le Moine, and is to receive her First Holy Communion at Midnight Mass.

It is not our intention to enter upon any controversy in this short relation, nor to give Mary Dawson's reasons for the step she took. Suffice it to say that she set about to seek the truth; above all she prayed; and God, Who hears every earnest prayer, set her upon the right path, which she followed faithfully. Six months before she implored Father Le Moine to give her conditional baptism; but he, usually so mild and gentle, was inexorable; she could not obtain her mother's consent, therefore she must wait until she would be of age. The probation would do her good, he maintained; it would strengthen her character, and show whether she was possessed of perseverance.

Mrs. Dawson, naturally enough, felt what she considered her daughter's defection, keenly; she could not give her consent to the step Mary desired to take, but she did not treat her harshly. Her sorrow was trial enough for Mary, who suffered as a warm-hearted girl cannot but suffer when she knows her duty to God clashes with the tender love she bears her parents; but when God calls we must obey, no matter at what cost. Mary came of age on the 8th December, but her Baptism was deferred until Christmas Eve. Pere Le Moine performed the ceremony in the morning about ten o'clock in the little Ursuline church. None were present but Mr. and

Mrs. Wilson, who were the sponsors, Katie shedding floods of happy tears, and Harry, who looked happy and very serious.

She was to receive her First Holy Communion at Midnight Mass; fervently she prayed for the grace of a good Communion, and as the sweet voice of last year sang out "Gloria in excelsis Deo," a heavenly smile lit up her lovely countenance, while she thanked God for the gift she had received since last she heard that glorious hymn. At the Elevation she bowed her head to adore the God Who had revealed Himself to her. At the Holy Communion,—but we must draw a veil over her feelings at that sacred moment; we may only hear her murmur in her joy and gratitude to God resting upon her heart: "I am all thine, my Jesus; do with me as Thou wilt; I give myself to Thee."

"Gloria in Excelsis Deo!"

* * * * *

For a third time we must visit the little church of the Ursulines on Christmas Eve for Midnight Mass. It looks as usual; one would think it was last year or the year before, so little has anything changed. Shall we find the Wilsons where we are accustomed to see them? Yes, here are Mr. and Mrs. Wilson with Katie and Harry, but where is Mary Dawson? We miss her; she is not with them; she is not in the little church. Pere Le Moine, as before, is the celebrant and Mass is in progress.

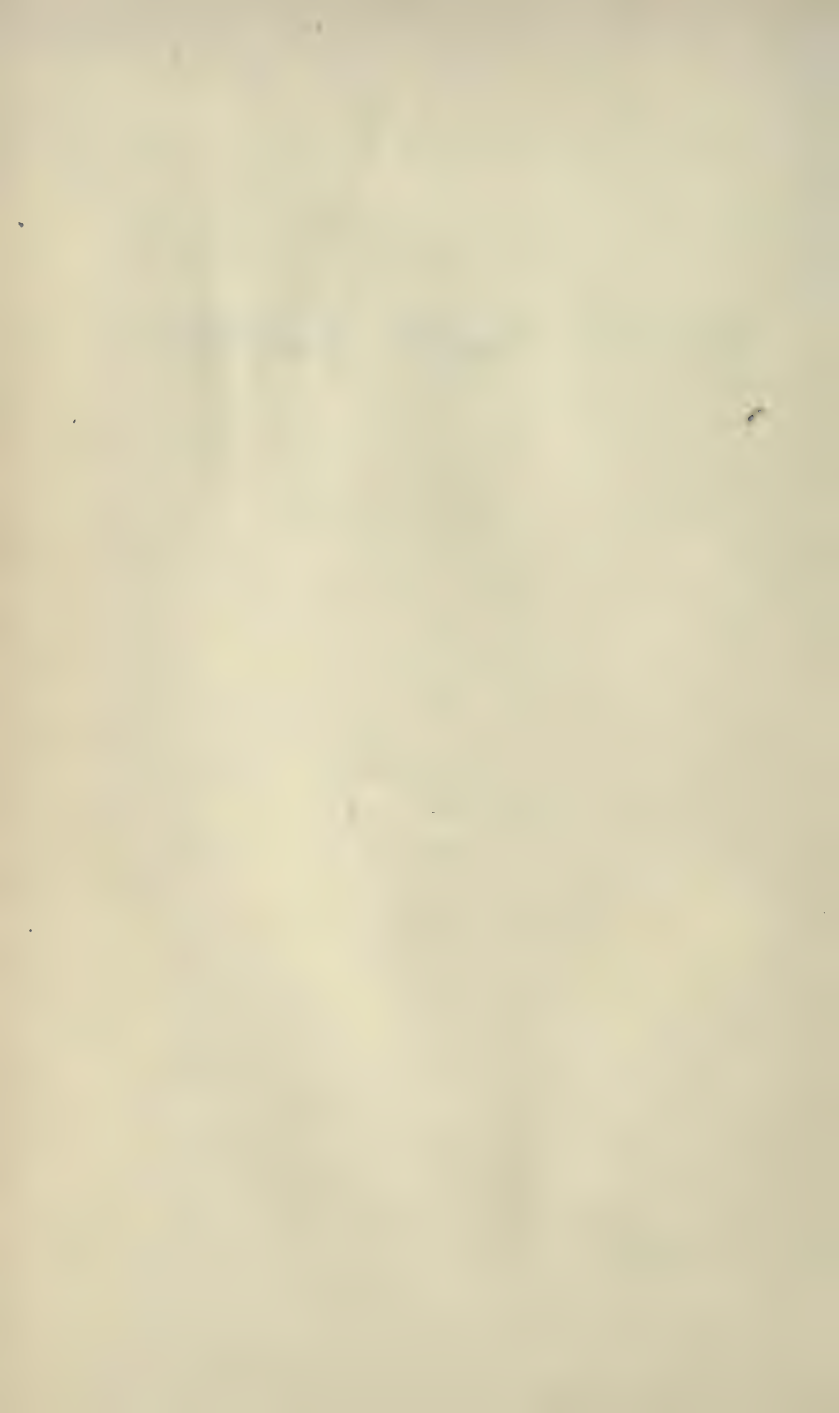
"Gloria in excelsis Deo!" rings out from the cloistered choir. The soloist is not the sweet-voiced

nun we heard before; we thought her voice sweet and lovely; so it was, but this is different; it is richer, fuller, more melodious, more of heaven, if we may so speak. "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" The singer seems to be singing her heart right up to God.

Katie, as the notes burst out, puts up her handkerchief to stifle a little sob. A look of pain passes over Harry's face, and he turns pale; he buries his face in his hands and prays earnestly, fervently, until he is calm and resigned. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson turn a little uneasily and settle themselves to pray with increased devotion. They all recognize the voice of their dear little friend, Mary Dawson. She has now consecrated that voice and all her talents to the service of God. On the 8th December she received the habit of an Ursuline novice after three months' probation as postulant. She is known now as Sister Mary of the Immaculate Conception.

"Gloria in Excelsis Deo!"

MINDS THAT CHANGE



CHAPTER I.

A little cottage stands about fifty feet back from the road on the outskirts of Holsworthy, not far from Derriton Bridge, crossing the turbulent stream which runs Derriton mills.

Holsworthy is a small but important town in North Devon; important because it is the market town for all the country for miles around, and on market days it presents a busy scene; the cattle market is far famed.

The cottage, dignified by the name of "Cedar Cottage," because a few straggling cedars skirt the edge of the garden, is not a romantic vine-clad or ivy-clad cottage, but is simply a small stone dwelling, set down in its garden plot, and is little better than the laborers' cottages scattered at intervals along the same road. The garden had been trimmed up a little, and made to look as well as possible under adverse circumstances.

A few clumsy, much-battered old seats stood under the cedars, and here, on a lovely afternoon late in May, sat a young girl deeply engaged in fine crochet-work of the variety known as "Irish Crochet." The girl had been weeping and had just dried her eyes, remarking to the old woman, wearing a large sun-bonnet, who stood before her:

"I must not indulge in crying, Betty; it is bad for the eyes, and it takes all my eyesight to do this fine crochet, besides there is a hurry for it; Miss Fry is to be married in a month, and it is an order for her."

"I do wish 'ee 'adn't to do it, Miss Agnes; it's all very fine fur ladies like 'ee to do a bit of croschay for past-time, or make a 'bit of a collar fur yoursel', but we'en it comes to 'urtin' your pretty eyes and prickin' up your fingers with thickee fine croschay needle, it's too much, I say."

"You know very well, Betty, I don't mind the work if only mother were better; besides, it must be done, for we have not enough to live upon, and mother must have the things she needs. Dr. Bramwell was here to-day and he gives very little hope of her recovery." Here the rebellious tears began to flow again, and the crochet-work was dropped in her lap.

"She is asleep now, and I came out here to sit, that I might have a little fresh air, and enjoy the garden that your Andrew has been so kind as to rake up for me; will you thank him for me, and tell him that the flowers are coming up nicely?"

"That I will, Miss Agnes, and a proud lad 'e'll be. You know that me an' mine will always be ready to do aught for 'ee or the mistress. Wun't 'ee go now an' 'ave a bit of a walk, w'ile I bide to mind the mistress. If she wakes I can do fur 'er. Do 'ee put down your work an' go now, there's a dear."

"I think I will, Betty, take a run down Under Lane and gather some primroses, mother is so fond

of them; and when I return 'I will run over to Derriton Mills and get a pat of fresh butter.'"

While Agnes Trewin goes for her walk, and Betty, her old nurse, glad to get her off, goes into the cottage to give it a good sweeping and tidying up, we will give a little of the early history of our heroine.

Her father, Dr. Trewin, had the best practice in Holsworthy and all the countryside. During his lifetime they lived in a fine old house on Bodmin Street, not far from the great Market Square. There were two children, Agnes, who at the time our tale opens, is twenty-eight years of age, though she looks much younger, and Charles, two years younger. The son left home suddenly when he was sixteen, and had never been heard of since. Dr. Trewin seldom smiled after the departure of his son. Two years before we find Agnes sitting in the garden of that little cottage, he died. His affairs were in a great tangle; books had not been kept, accounts neither collected nor entered; finally, after things were straightened out, there was nothing for his widow and daughter but a matter of a hundred pounds and a small life insurance. They had to move from their commodious house and preferred to go towards the country rather than into a back street. They chose Derriton way, because between the end of Bodmin Street and the Bridge there was a little Catholic Church, and it was not far to walk. The fine old church at the other end of the town was, in pre-Reformation time, a Catholic church, but, like all the fine cathedrals and

churches throughout England, is now in the possession of Protestants.

Mrs. Trewin's health completely broke down, and Agnes, besides caring for her mother, and doing all the work of the little cottage, augmented their small income by doing crochet-work, or embroidery, or fine sewing. Her old nurse, Betty Saunders, who lived not far away, claimed the privilege of coming sometimes to the assistance of her former mistress; and her sons, Andrew and Tim, loved to do up the garden.

The morning after the above scene it was raining, and Agnes, after doing up the morning work and attending to her mother, who she saw with grief was growing weaker, was seated in the little parlor at her crochet-work. Her favorite chair and work-table had been saved from the wreck, and a few pieces of good old-fashioned furniture, so the place looked refined and home-like. Mrs. Trewin's room was on the other side of the narrow passage looking out on the front garden. The passage ended in a room somewhat larger, the dining-room; off this on one side was a second bed-room, and a kitchen on the other side.

Agnes thought sadly of her future as she bent over her work; how was she to live without her mother? What could she do with her life? What was the use of anything? Why had Charlie so completely disappeared? She was afraid of becoming rebellious as the tears began to flow, and she silently uttered a prayer for courage and patience.

There was a sound at the gate, and, as Agnes looked out, she saw a tall young man walk up the garden path. She flew to her mother's room to see whether she still slept, then carefully closed the door before opening the front door. Not giving the new-comer time to speak, she lifted her hand and almost whispered:

"My mother is asleep; she is ill; please speak in a low tone."

"Agnes!" said the young man, in a low voice, seizing the up-raised hand, "do you not know me?"

"Charlie," she gasped, "come this way," and she drew him into the dining-room, closing the door.

"Charlie!" she said again, and burst into tears.

"Aggie darling," he whispered, putting his arm around her and drawing her head to his breast. "How is it I find you like this? When did my father die? What is the matter with my mother?"

"Oh, Charlie, how we have mourned you! My father never held up his head after you left; he died two years ago. I don't know how he mismanaged his affairs, but there was very little left for us. We had to give up the old home and come here to live; but indeed we are very comfortable, if only mother were well."

"What is the matter with mother?" asked Charlie.

"She just seems to be fading away, and the doctor can do nothing for her; he gives little hope of her living more than about two months. How am I to tell her of your arrival? She will die of joy."

“Don’t you want to know first what I have been doing?”

“Yes, indeed, Charlie, where have you been all these long years?”

“I have been most of the time in England, and for about two years in Paris,” Charlie replied.

“In Paris! In England!” exclaimed Agnes. “Why we thought you had gone to Canada, or perhaps to the United States. Why did you not write?”

“Aggie dear, I am sorry to say I parted with my father in anger; he wanted me to be a doctor, and I had an utter distaste for that profession; I wanted to be put at some sort of business, but father would not hear of it; so, as I had ten pounds of my own saved, I just went away. I was mad and rash to do it, but I was only sixteen; and once I had gone I felt I could not come back nor write until I had made something of myself. I have done no wrong excepting the one great wrong of going away like that and treating you all so badly. I have been faithful to the practice of my religion.”

“Thank God!” whispered Agnes.

“I have not come back,” resumed Charles, “like the hero of a story-book, laden with wealth; nor do I return like the prodigal son, in the depth of poverty. After many struggles, which I can tell you about some other time, I procured a position in the C—— Insurance Company of London about seven years ago. You know I was always pretty good at my French, which I kept up, and after I had been in the employ of this company for nearly five years, they sent me to their house in Paris. I was recalled

to the head house six months ago, and now, Aggie dear, there has been another change, and I am no further away than Exeter. I never asked for a holiday all these years, and being so near home, I could not resist the desire to come to see you all. I asked for two months leave and readily obtained it. I have a thousand pounds saved, and I am going to spend it all to make mother well, and give you a good time! The first thing to be done is to move out of this place to a decent house. Though I am not immensely rich, I have a good salary, and I can keep you and mother as you ought to be; with a thousand pounds to start, it will be easy."

"I don't think, dear Charlie," replied Agnes, "that we can move from here; mother is really seriously ill, and could not be moved. There is a bedroom which you can have, and as I must always be near mother, a couch in the parlor will do for me. I am so thankful you are to be here for two months; it gives me courage; and if the end comes while you are here it will be easier for me. But I must get mother's broth ready, she usually has it about this time, if awake."

When the broth was ready Agnes took it to her mother, while Charles remained in the dining-room, keeping very quiet.

"I see you are awake, mother," said Agnes, "here is your broth and a little bit of toast; you must take it all."

"I thought I heard muffled voices as though coming from the dining-room; I have been awake for ten minutes; is anyone there?"

"Yes, mother," Agnes replied, "someone has called to see you, but you must have your broth first."

"Who is it, Aggie?" the invalid pleaded; "I have been dreaming and thinking so much of Charlie; would that he might come home before I die."

"Your broth will be quite cold, mother, darling; do take it and a wee bit of this toast."

Mrs. Trewin obediently took the broth and part of the toast.

"Now, Aggie, who is it?" she demanded.

Agnes knelt down beside the bed, saying:

"Dear mother, prepare yourself for a great joy—"

"It is Charlie!" cried Mrs. Trewin, trembling violently; "let him come at once!"

Charles heard the cry and entered quietly, kneeling by his mother's bed. No word was spoken for a few minutes. Mrs. Trewin with her hand on her son's head, wept silently, while Agnes watched anxiously on the other side.

At length Charles raised his head, and kissing his mother, said:

"Am I forgiven?"

"Oh, my son, my son! God be praised!" said Mrs. Trewin, fervently.

Further conversation was impossible in Mrs. Trewin's weak condition, and her son sat quietly by her bed, holding his mother's hand, while Agnes went about her duties.

CHAPTER II.

In the afternoon, while Betty, who was greatly rejoiced at the young master's return, sat with Mrs. Trewin, Agnes and Charlie went for a walk; the rain having cleared off and the May sunshine bringing out the delicious scent of the spring flowers.

They walked through the flower-strewn lanes, which can be found nowhere in such perfection as in lovely Devonshire, and Charlie declared it was good to be back again.

"Now, Agnes, we must have a little sensible talk about our affairs," began Charlie. "What became of young Bounsell? I thought at one time—"

"Yes, Charlie," replied Agnes, "we were to have been married, but he died eight years ago, two years after you left."

"Dear old Aggie! and I have been such an egotistical fool that I have never been near you in all these years, while you have had so much to bear. Was there never anyone else?"

"No, never," broke in Agnes, "I never could care for another."

"Well, well, little sister, I am here at last to take care of you; you are such a little thing compared to me now, though once I used to wish I was as tall as you. I shall look out for you and mother

always, and you need do no more of that wretched crochet-work."

"It is not wretched crochet-work, let me tell you, Master Charles, it is very beautiful."

"Well, perhaps so, but a cobweb is quite as beautiful, and I can't have you injuring your eyes."

"I must finish what I am doing for Hetty Fry. I promised it to her and she would be disappointed."

"Give it to her for a wedding present, then, take no money for it," replied Charles.

"Let us be serious, dear Charles. I fear we shall not have mother for very long; you must see how weak she is; a few weeks is the most we can hope for. I am glad you are here to soften the end for her, and comfort me. But after, I cannot be a burden to you; you will want to marry soon and the old-maid sister must not be a hindrance. I can get along very well with the little mother leaves, and what I can earn."

"Old maid sister, indeed!" broke in Charlie. "I like that! you are only two years older than I, and you look younger. I shall not want to marry for at least ten years; I have never given the matter a thought; in ten years I shall only be thirty-six, quite young enough, and in the meantime perhaps my pretty sister may change her mind."

"Never, Charlie; don't think such a thing."

"Oh, well, it does not matter. Now my plan is this: You will come to Exeter to live. I know a nice little house in the Southern-haye where we can set up housekeeping. We will take all the dear

old things you have left with us, and it will be quite jolly."

"It would be very nice, Charlie, but——"

"But me no buts; Madam, I want a housekeeper, and who would look after my interests so well as my own sister? Now that's settled. Tell me all about the new doctor."

"Dr. Bramwell has father's practice. He has been very kind to mother; and his daughter, though only twenty, is a great friend of mine; she is a dear girl."

"How about Father Browne?" asked Charles.

"He is still alive, dear old Father. How rejoiced he will be at your return."

"They must all consider me a black sheep; indeed I feel very much like one; I have behaved abominably!"

"Don't say so, Charlie dear; it is all over and past, and we have you home again. Now we must return, Betty will want to go home."

* * * * *

On the next morning Charles went for a ramble through the old town, the home of his boyhood. He called in at Betty's cottage; she carefully dusted a chair for him, saying:

"It does a body good to see 'ee 'ome again, Mais-ter Charles, bain't 'ee glad to be back?"

"That I am, Betty, and very sorry for having stayed away so long. 'It grieves me to find my mother and sister in this condition; and mother so ill."

Betty wiped away a tear with a corner of her apron as she replied:

“The poor dear mistress! her b’aint long for this world; but her be mighty cheered up to ’ave ’ee back again, and ’ee mustn’t sorrow too much for what is past. The Lord ’as sent ’ee back in time to be a comfort to the mistress and Miss Agnes.”

“That I hope always to be, Betty; I shall not forget my trust.”

Andrew and Tim came in to shake hands awkwardly with the young gentleman whom they could scarcely remember; then Charles left.

Before crossing the bridge Charles called in at the house at the Mill to have a word with the old people, and here he found the daughters grown up into fine rosy lasses. One with bared arms making butter out of the celebrated Devonshire cream; the other busy about house-work. All were glad to see him, for the news of his return had spread.

Entering the town by Bodmin Street, he called upon the old priest who had baptized him twenty-six years before. The old man was rejoiced to welcome his strayed sheep.

Charles walked through Bodmin Street, past the old house where he had been born, now occupied by strangers. Then across the Market Square, where he had played marbles in his boyhood. It was not market day, so there were few people about; he met only two or three to give him a welcome and a hearty grip of the hand. He crossed the head of the town and walked around by the English church. He had not gone far in this direction before he came to a stately house where he had been told Dr. Bram-



ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL CHURCH, HOLSWORTHY.

well resided; he intended calling upon his father's successor. As he neared the door he became aware of a vision in white, standing at the top of the two or three steps, about to descend. From the crown of her pretty head to the tip of her dainty foot Dolly Bramwell was clad in white, and very charming she looked—a sweet, Devonshire maid.

Charles, confused and dazzled, raised his hat as the vision descended the steps, saying stupidly:

“Does Dr. Bramwell live here?” while the plate with the doctor's name stared him in the face. The maiden inclined her head, saying:

“Yes, if you ring the bell you will be attended to.”

“Charles paid his visit to the doctor, thanked him for his kindness to his mother and sister, feeling all the time a sense of confusion and bewilderment, for a pair of roguish brown eyes haunted him, in which he fancied lurked a possibility of laughing at him.

After wandering about the old church-yard for a while, reading the familiar tombstones, and speculating whether any of his remote ancestors were buried there, for the Trewins were a very old Hols-worthy family, and possibly lived there in Catholic days, though his nearer relatives were, of course, buried in the little Catholic burying-ground outside the town, Charles turned his steps homeward.

As he entered the gate at the cottage he saw Agnes seated under the cedars, and with her the vision in white.

"By jove!" he muttered under his breath.

"Come here, Charlie," called his sister, "I want to introduce you to my friend, Miss Bramwell."

The fun in the vision's eyes brimmed over, and she laughed a sweet, silvery laugh, saying:

"I have met Mr. Trewin before."

"But where?" asked Agnes.

Charles spoke before Dolly could answer.

"I met Miss Bramwell at her own door, but I did not know she was the doctor's daughter."

"But I knew you," said Dolly, mischievously, "for I had heard of your return, and there are not so many strangers in our dear, stupid old town that I could be mistaken; besides, at a first glance, there is a little resemblance to Agnes. But now I must go; I do hope your mother may soon be better."

Charles would have walked home with her, but she protested that she would not have him walk all that way back again. So he bowed gravely, raising his hat as he held the gate open for her to pass. Dolly shot one quick glance at him as she bade him good-morning, and her mental observation was that he was worth looking at.

Charles was a handsome young man, tall, a trifle over six feet, well built, and with a countenance that people characterize as "good," one to be trusted. Dolly was also tall, of stately bearing, tempered with fun-loving brown eyes. Agnes was small, a pretty blonde, with gentle blue eyes, a dainty little bit of girlhood, not looking much older than Dolly.

CHAPTER III.

A few days after this meeting Charles went for a long walk up Windmill Hill, finding to his disgust that the old windmill, a time-honored landmark, had been removed. Returning, he thought he would pass through Under Lane to see how the primroses looked that he remembered always covered the hedges at this season. The entrance to this beautiful Devonshire lane is spoiled by the railway, which crosses its end; but a little way on it is as beautiful as ever. The hedges on each side are very high and thick, built of stones and mud. They are entirely covered with wild flowers and black-berry brambles; in May they are ablaze with primroses, while wild violets are hidden under the foilage, and sweet snowdrops nestle at the foot, these last peeping up before the snow leaves the ground.

Charles had not advanced far before he saw Miss Bramwell, with a basket on her arm, reaching up to gather the highest primroses. He stopped before she perceived him, and raising his hat, said:

“Good-morning, Miss Bramwell, you have found one of the favorite spots in Holsworthy.”

Dolly turned quickly, a blush spreading over her face as she said:

“Oh, good-morning, Mr. Trewin; I often come

here to gather primroses, they are so plentiful that I can fill my basket easily standing at one spot."

"I see your basket is full, so it would be superfluous to offer to help you; I have been for a long walk; supposing we sit down on these two big stones; I want to ask you about the old windmill."

"Oh, have you been up there?" asked Dolly.

"I have been to Windmill Hill," Charles replied, "but where is the Windmill? the landscape is sadly marred by its removal; did it fall down?"

"No, it was shortly after we came to Holsworthy that it was taken down, and I always thought it a pity; so did my father. You must remember old Peter Lee, everyone says he was always crusty."

"Yes, I remember him well; as a boy I was one of the band who used to rob his orchard at the foot of the hill. He used to set his dog on us, and if he could catch any of us he gave us a taste of his stick, rightly so, too."

"Well, you know he owns the hill, which he keeps under grass, as he grazes his sheep there. He declared he was tired of having people climb his hill, trampling down his grass to visit the old windmill, so he had it taken down."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Charles.

"Yes, indeed, the townspeople were very indignant over it, and I was afraid the young men would punish him in some dreadful way. However, the land and windmill were his, so nothing could be done."

"Don't you admire the scenery around Hols-

worthy?" asked Charles. "It is built on a hill surrounded by six others; whichever way you look the view is beautiful."

"Oh, I love it, and the town is a dear, sleepy old place."

"Not so sleepy on market days and in Fair time," replied Charles.

"No, it is lively enough then. Peter's Fair is a grand old institution; it is quite romantic to hear the proclamation read from the place where the old "Great Tree" stood, opening the Fair. I have often wondered what may be the origin of that quaint ceremony, and indeed many other old-time customs which seem never to have been allowed to drop in this historic old town, for I am sure it has a history, and I should much like to know something of it. It is only within the past two years that I have known Holsworthy, though I am a Devonshire girl, but our home was in the south, at Sidmouth."

"You must miss the sea sadly in this inland town," answered Charles.

"Yes, I do, but I am learning to love Holsworthy, and it is not far to Bude; we often go there for a breath of the sea."

"When we were children my mother used often to take my sister and myself to Bude; we used to build wonderful castles and forts in the sands there. But I think the shore at Bude is dreary when the tide is out, there is such a long stretch of sand, the sea goes so far out."

"Yes," replied Dolly, "I noticed that it is not so beautiful as our dear Sidmouth. But, Mr. Tre-

win, can you not give me a little of the ancient history of Holsworthy and its customs? I should like to know something of the old church; I feel certain it was not built by the Establishment."

"You are right there; it was not," replied Charles. "I think I can satisfy your desire to know a little about Holsworthy, for when I was a lad I was greatly interested in the old town, and procured permission to examine the documents kept in the muniment box at the church."

"How delighted I am!" exclaimed Dolly. "I have so longed to know all about it, but never asked anyone."

"Holsworthy," resumed Charles, "is very ancient indeed, for it dates from Saxon times, and stood before William the Conqueror placed his heel on England. The origin of the name is Hulz, which signifies wood, and worthy, meaning village or town; so it was evidently a town in the woods."

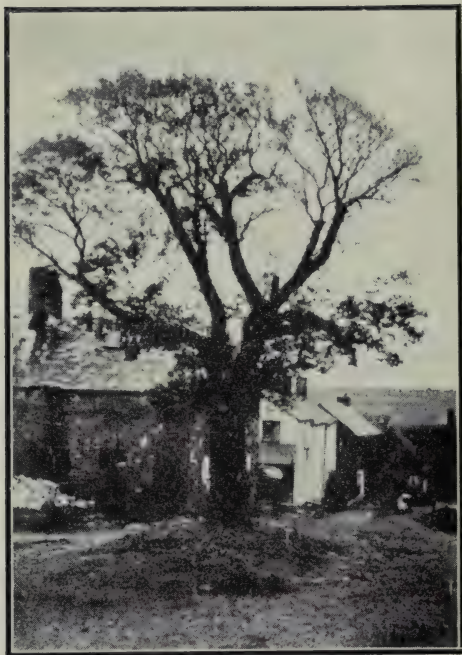
"How delightfully interesting!" broke in Dolly. "Now tell me about the church."

"The parish church was built in the reign of Henry II., sometime between 1133 and 1189, and dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul."

"Ah! then I was right," cried Dolly, "I knew it had been a Catholic church as soon as I walked through it. A Catholic could easily see that."

"Yes," said Charles, "it was that very thought made me so desirous to learn all about it and the early history of Holsworthy."

"How sad, to see all those beautiful churches



THE GREAT TREE, HOLSWORTHY.

diverted from the true worship. They were stolen!" Dolly exclaimed with energy.

"Yes, indeed," Charles replied. "They were stolen, and so it is all through England, Ireland and Scotland. The grand old cathedrals and churches have been stolen from the Catholics who built them, and are now in the hands of heretics, while we have to content ourselves with very humble buildings. Have you ever seen the Cathedral at Exeter?"

"Oh, yes, many times; is it not beautiful? But tell me some more about this place."

"The church, then, was built in the reign of Henry II.," continued Charles. "At the opening of the church a three days' fair was founded to be perpetual and named St. Peter's Fair. It is still held on the first Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday after the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. The first Charter was read under the "Great Tree," which was still standing when I left Holsworthy; it has since fallen and is replaced by a large stone. The Charter was read under the Tree every year at the opening of the Fair, and you say they now read it from the stone."

"Yes," Dolly replied. "It is very interesting to hear the Town Crier, when he mounts the stone at precisely eight o'clock in the morning, declare in stentorian tones, that the Fair is open; and he commands that during its continuance all manner of persons shall keep the King's Majesty's Peace under pain of grievous imprisonment. It sounds so imposing."

"And that has gone on every year, I suppose,

without fail, for all these hundreds of years. It is astonishing how these old customs are kept up in England. But I have not told you yet about the tower. It was not completed for two hundred years after the building of the church, even that was long before the days of the Reformation. Have you ever observed the structure of the tower?"

"Yes, I have often marvelled at its beauty," answered Dolly.

"And with reason," continued Charles. "For just proportions and beauty of architecture it is said to be without a superior on earth, which sounds very much like an exaggeration. The four pinnacles measure eighteen feet from base to point."

"Did you hear," asked Dolly, "that during a fearful storm we had some months ago, one of the pinnacles was seen to rock, and several stones were hurled across the street?"

"No," replied Charles, "I had not heard of it; I hope it was not injured."

"I think not; there was great consternation over it, but it has all been made secure."

"What do you think of the chimes?"

"They are the sweetest and loveliest I ever heard. Visitors who come to Holsworthy and who understand such things, say they are very beautiful."

"So they are," said Charles, "they sound particularly sweet at a little distance from one of the hills."

"There are several other quaint customs that I

want to talk over, but I must go home now," Dolly said, rising.

Charles walked with her to Dr. Bramwell's house, then turned into the churchyard to ruminate among the tombstones. He walked home in a brown study, and it is probable that his thoughts did not stray far from his late companion.

* * * * *

One morning, about a week after the encounter in Under Lane, Dolly walked out to pay a visit to her friend Agnes and carry some dainties to Mrs. Trewin, intending to return by Under Lane and fill her basket again with primroses.

After a short stay with the invalid, Agnes and Dolly went into the garden and seated themselves under the cedars. Charles had gone for a walk to visit some of the spots dear to the memories of his boyhood.

"Did your brother tell you, Aggie dear," began Dolly, "of the fine lecture in ancient history he gave me a few days ago? I was intensely interested. I knew Holsworthy was a pretty old burg, but I would never have thought it dated from Saxon times."

"Yes, indeed," said Agnes, "Holsworthy, as well as all the surrounding country is full of interest. There is a quantity of priceless antique furniture stored away in farm houses, and nothing would induce the farmer or his wife to spare one article."

"I have seen some of it when I have driven out with father on his rounds," said Dolly, "they are always proud to have it admired."

"Quaint old customs too keep their hold on the

people of rural places in England. Did Charles tell you about the chosing of the 'Pretty Maid' for the year?"

"No, I heard about it last year; Miss Fry was chosen, the one who is to be married shortly; but I did not understand it; do tell me how it originated?"

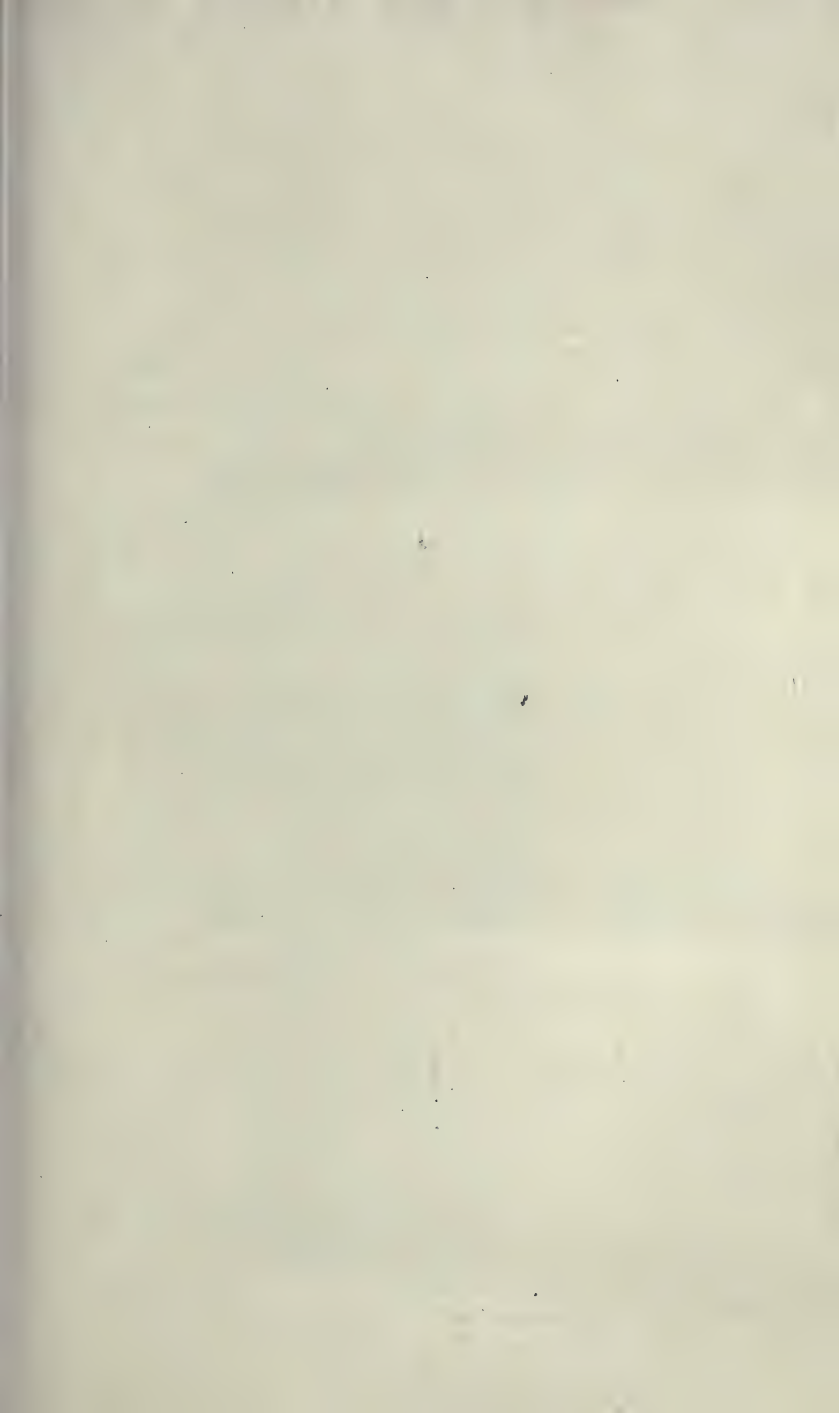
"Here's Charlie!" exclaimed Agnes, as the young gentleman entered at the gate, "he knows more about these old customs than I do. Come here, Charlie."

Betty Saunders appeared in the doorway as Charles joined his sister and Dolly, and looking at the group, she smiled contentedly. She had been putting the house "to rights," and looked out to see what her young lady was doing; Mrs. Trewin was sleeping.

"'Ow purty they do look there, to be sure," soliloquized Betty, "and my dear young lady should never be doin' arder wark than 'er be doin' now; and 'er wun't neyther, now Maister Charles be coom.

"What a sweet young lady Miss Dolly be, and 'ow well suited 'er be to our Maister Charlie; just the right 'eight, and so queenly lookin'; full o' fun, too, 'er be. Now I do 'ope as 'ow 'er and Maister Charlie 'ill be sensible and take to each ayther, for it 'ud be a purty match. And Miss Agnes, too, I do 'ope and pray, 'ill some day git over 'er disappointment, an' meet som' un 'er'd like."

Charles threw himself on the grass as Agnes said:





A CORNER, HOLSWORTHY.

"Tell Dolly about the choosing of the 'Pretty Maid,' Charlie."

"Oh, do they still keep that up?" asked Charles.

"Why, certainly," said Agnes. "Did you ever know of their dropping an old custom here?"

"This custom is not so very old; at least comparatively, it does not date back into ancient times as some other customs, but it is quaint enough. I don't think it is much more than a hundred years old; it originated, some say, in an eccentric bachelor clergyman, others say it was a brother of a clergyman; some give one name, some another. However, whichever it was, he bequeathed £100 in trust, £2.10 to be given annually on the opening day of Peter's Fair, at twelve o'clock noon, in public, to the young lady, under thirty years of age, who is esteemed by her young companions, as most worthy for comeliness, amiability, quiet behaviour and constant attendance at church. The church wardens are the final judges, and the gift is presented by the clergyman in front of the church porch. It usually attracts quite a crowd."

"So it did last year," Dolly said; "we could see it from our house; it is quaint, and in some ways a pretty custom, but I should think it very trying for the maiden chosen; I should not care to be the favorite."

"There is not the least danger," said Agnes, "of your being chosen to this honor, as it is a unique Protestant gift, and you are not eligible, my dear, handsome Dolly."

"The same maiden can never be chosen a second time, and to the credit of the lovely women of our town be it said, the gift has never been withheld for lack of a worthy subject."

Dolly now rose, saying she had yet to fill her basket, and must be going. Charlie asked whether primroses were intended for the basket, and whether they were to be gathered in Under Lane; to both of which questions she answered "Yes."

"Then I must go with you and help fill the basket," declared Charlie.

Dolly made her adieux, and they started for their walk. The conversation turned upon doings and sayings in and around Holsworthy. As they passed a fine old beech tree, whose branches hung over the hedge, Charlie called Dolly's attention to it and said he used to gather nuts from that tree when a boy. Dolly assured him it was still the habit of the present day boy to gather nuts there.

The primroses were soon gathered, and Charles walked with Dolly as far as her house, then once more he found himself entering the gate leading to the familiar church yard which had such a charm for him.

Before starting for home he said to himself:

"I may as well be candid with myself; I am in love, seriously in love with that dear girl. I must put it all away; I must never show it, must never think of it again; above all, Agnes must not know, must not have a suspicion. It was only a few days ago that I assured Aggie that I would not even think of marriage for at least ten years! And now, oh

Dolly! I could not ask you to wait even half that time; and you will be won by someone else."

Dolly, on reaching home, went straight to her own room and locked the door. She sat down on a low chair and put the basket of primroses on the floor beside her; then, clasping her hands and gazing straight before her, she thus took herself to task:

"What do you mean, Dolly Bramwell? Have you no more spirit than to fall in love with the first newccmer, because he chances to be handsome and well-spoken? He has been nothing but civil to you; he cares no more for you than for any stranger, while you have given him your heart; you know you have; it is of no use denying it. It is sheer perversity to care for one who cares nothing for you, while no less than half a dozen young men protest that they are ready to die for you. Pshaw!! What are these striplings compared to Charlie? He will go away and I shall never see him again. I must not go often to see dear little Aggie. How terrible it would be if I were to betray myself!"

CHAPTER IV.

Charles spent most of his time at the bedside of his mother, ministering to her, and helping Agnes. About five weeks after his return she quietly breathed her last one morning. Her children were on each side of the bed and Father Browne close by to give the last blessing.

A few days after the funeral Charles went to Exeter and engaged a comfortable house in the Southern-haye, then returning to Holsworthy, they packed up their belongings, and left for their new home.

It was a sad parting for Agnes. She had lived all her life in Holsworthy, and had many dear friends, among whom Dolly held almost first place, though she had known her but two years.

Dolly wept unrestrainedly at the little railway station as she clung to Agnes, while poor old Betty could hardly tear herself away from her young mistress.

* * * * *

Agnes and Charles settled down to housekeeping and were very cheerful. Charles had only a few friends, not having been long in Exeter, and these were chiefly among the men in his own office; but

the wives, sisters and daughters of these called on Agnes and soon she had as many friends as she wished for.

In the autumn Agnes invited Dolly to come for a week. It was a trying time for Dolly and Charlie with their carefully-guarded secrets; guarded from each other as well as from the world; but blissful withal, and most likely neither would willingly have foregone the visit. Agnes was serenely unconscious.

Christmas came with all the old-fashioned customs of that holy season. The shops set forth tempting displays of Christmas gifts and Christmas fare. It was hard to be unhappy with so much brightness around, and Agnes was not unhappy, while Charlie was too manly to mar her pleasure or his own with vain regrets, so he, too, was not unhappy.

As they sat in their cosy parlor on Christmas eve, listening to the "Waits" outside singing their carols, to whom Charles had already given their "Christmasing," Charles said:

"I am glad you decided to accept Mrs. Bentley's invitation to dinner for to-morrow evening, Agnes, they are a charming family, and Oliver, who is in my office, is one of the nicest fellows I know."

Agnes' heart stirred a little with a pleasurable feeling. She did not know why, but it was particularly agreeable to her to dine at Mrs. Bentley's on Christmas night. However, she only said:

"You know, Charlie, we are in mourning, but Mrs. Bentley promised the dinner should be strictly "en famille," with no ceremony; she thought it

would be a little lonely for us to dine quite alone on such a day."

"So it would, Aggie dear, though you are a most delightful little housekeeper and I am a very fine fellow indeed; still a little outside life occasionally will do us no harm. Though you are in mourning," he continued, "I have brought you a little Christmas gift which you can wear to-morrow evening; it will brighten you up a little."

He drew a small package from his pocket as he spoke and unwrapping it, he took out a case which he handed to Agnes. On opening it she discovered a beautiful diamond brooch, small, but exquisite.

"Oh, Charlie, you extravagant boy," she exclaimed, "how lovely, but why did you do it?"

"Because I wanted to enhance the loveliness of my wee little sister," he replied, kissing her. "I feel I can't do too much for you, dear."

Agnes put on the brooch at once, saying, "It is very beautiful."

Silence fell between them for awhile as the "Waits'" voices died away into the distance. Presently the door-bell rang, and shortly after the trim little maid entered with a box addressed to Miss Trewin. Agnes opened it, and exclaimed:

"Flowers, lovely Christmas roses! oh, you darlings," burying her face in them.

"Here is a card," said Charlie, "see who sent them, dear."

Agnes took the card and read:

"Best Christmas wishes from Oliver Bentley."
Agnes blushed, saying quietly:

"How very kind of him. Ring the bell, Charlie; I must have Matilda bring some water to put them in."

* * * * *

On Christmas night Agnes and Charles dined at Mrs. Bentley's; it was a quiet but happy family dinner party. The married son and daughter were both home with wife, husband and children. The children came in with the dessert, and remained the rest of the evening. Oliver was a model uncle, starting games for the children, but he found frequent opportunities to have a quiet chat with Agnes, who had quite won the hearts of his mother and sisters.

A few afternoons later he called upon Agnes at the tea hour; he had not been there long before his youngest sister came in to have a good talk with Agnes.

"You here, Oliver? I did not expect to meet you; what about your office?"

"Oh, we are out early to-day, you know, Christmas time; I shouldn't wonder if Trewin were to come in soon." And so he did. It was not clear that Oliver enjoyed his sister's interruption. However, he soon left with her.

That evening after dinner Charlie went out, and Agnes sat alone before the parlor fire, gazing into the coals. Her thoughts ran something like this:

"I never thought I could care for anyone again, and now I know that I love Mr. Bentley—Oliver. At first I would not believe it possible, but now I

cannot deny it to myself. I must not see him often, and must not encourage him, for I am almost afraid he is beginning to care for me. Charlie must not know, for I have promised to be his housekeeper, and he would be so much disappointed after preparing this comfortable little home for me. Dear old Charlie! how good he is to me. I wish he loved some nice girl, but he seems to treat them all alike; he shows no preference."

Her thoughts ran on in this strain for an hour, when she heard the door-bell ring; she supposed it was Charlie returning and took no heed, while the maid, Matilda, without asking for orders, opened the door and ushered in Oliver Bentley. For a moment Agnes was overcome, but she quickly rallied as she rose to greet him.

"Charlie is out, Mr. Bentley," she began.

"Yes," he replied, "I know he is out; the staff are having a Christmas supper at the Prince Clarence this evening, and he will not return for awhile. I left them over their speeches and songs, having no place on the programme; and, taking advantage of the liberty given during the Christmas holidays, have come again to see you."

Agnes turned pale, then red, and was silent.

"Have I offended you in coming again so soon, Miss Trewin."

"No," replied Agnes, feeling very miserable, "why should I be offended at my brother's friend calling? I will ring for coffee."

"Pray do not, Miss Trewin, my stay may perhaps

be short, and, if happily it be prolonged, I—why I don't think I shall care for coffee."

Agnes rose and nervously poked the fire, which did not require poking; she wished Charlie, or anyone, would come in. Glancing at the clock, she knew Charlie would not come in for an hour yet.

"It is not as your brother's friend that I have called," Bentley began, "I wanted to see you particularly; can you not guess why?" Leaning forward in his chair, he said earnestly:

"Miss Trewin, Agnes, I love you, and I want you to be my wife. I am perhaps abrupt, but I am very much in earnest, and I don't know how to make fine phrases. I love you; will you give me a little hope?"

"It is impossible, Mr. Bentley, I—I—have promised to be Charlie's house-keeper; pray do not speak of it again; do not mention it to Charlie." And Agnes, very pale, shrank back into her chair, trembling violently. She looked so small and helpless that Oliver felt like gathering her into his arms to protect her. He said:

"Is that your only reason, Miss Trewin? Can you not learn to love me a little if I wait? Charlie would never want to retain you as his housekeeper if you wished to marry, and I think he would have no objection to me."

"Oh, no, he would not object to you, but you don't understand; we made a compact when our mother died to stick to each other. He said he did not wish to marry, at least for ten years, and I—I—did not wish to—to—marry."

Agnes felt afraid she would cry; she wished she could run away to her room.

"You have not yet told me whether that is your only reason," Oliver said, leaning forward again, and possessing himself of the little hand that trembled on the arm of her chair.

"Tell me, could you not love me just a little? I will wait patiently and give you time to get used to me; perhaps you think me somewhat of an ogre to come suddenly upon you like this when I know your brother is engaged."

"Oh, no, you are not an ogre," and Agnes smiled a little, just a ghost of a smile.

"Now for an answer," said Oliver, gently, "I have not had it yet. Would it be impossible for you to love me?"

"I beg of you not to ask me; I cannot marry you."

"Can you love me?"

"I—I—oh, do not torment me!"

"I will leave you now; I have had my answer," Oliver said quietly. He kissed her hand reverently as he said good-night, and went out very quickly.

As soon as he was gone Agnes leaned back in her chair and cried miserably, then she went up to her room without waiting for Charlie.

Oliver Bentley hurried back to the hall where he had left his friends over the Christmas supper. They were just dispersing; he sought out Trewin, who exclaimed:

"Where have you been, old fellow? I missed you."

"I had some business to attend to. I am going to walk home with you. I want to talk to you."

"What's the matter, old chap?" said Trewin, "you look as though you had been seeing several ghosts."

"Come along and I will tell you."

As soon as they had started, Bentley poured out his tale, never heeding that Agnes had bidden him not to speak of it to her brother. He wound up by saying:

"I may be a conceited puppy, Trewin, but I believe she loves me without knowing it; at any rate she did not say she couldn't love me, only a lot of stuff about being your housekeeper, and that I was not to mention this matter to you. What do you say, Trewin, do you object to me? Will you spare your housekeeper?"

Charlie stopped in the street and turned to Bentley, saying joyously:

"Shake hands, old fellow; if you can win Agnes, nothing would give me greater happiness. I will dismiss my housekeeper this very night."

On reaching home and finding the parlor deserted, Charlie rushed up to his sister's room, knocking on the door, he called out:

"Are you in bed, Aggie?"

"No, Charlie," came the muffled reply.

"Then let me in."

It took a few minutes for Agnes to dry her eyes and compose her features, then she opened the door, asking:

"Had you a pleasant evening, dear?"

For answer Charlie gathered his little sister in his stalwart arms, and asked:

"Had you a pleasant evening, little one? my faithful little housekeeper."

Agnes trembled and hid her face on his breast; she was not good at dissembling.

"Dear little Aggie, tell me truly, do you love this man?"

No answer.

He is worthy of you, Aggie, if any man could be; he is a good honest man, a good Catholic, of devout Catholic stock. If you love him, darling, I would gladly see you marry him."

A sob was the only answer.

"Foolish little sister, did you think I meant to bind you to me forever, and that you might never marry? Believe me, I shall do very well indeed, and I dismiss my housekeeper from this moment."

Agnes looked up at last, her sweet blue eyes fairly drowned in tears.

"Do you really not mind, Charlie?" she asked.

"Mind! Aggie darling," he answered, "if you love Oliver Bentley you will make me very happy."

"I do love him, Charlie," she said, clasping her little hands on her brother's breast, then hiding her face in them.

"God bless you, dearest sister," he replied, lifting her tear-stained face and kissing her. "Now I will say good-night; you must get to bed."

The next morning Charles told his sister he had some pressing business in Holsworthy and would be back in the evening.

"You will not be lonely, I am sure, for no doubt Bentley will call, and you must be very good to him," he concluded, pinching her ear. She looked two years younger than he instead of two years older, she was so small compared to her big brother, and now her face was radiant with happiness.

* * * * *

Charles' mission to Holsworthy seemed to have prospered, for he returned in the evening in glorious spirits. Catching his sister about the waist, he whirled her around the room in a waltz.

"What is the matter, Charlie, have you fallen into a fortune?" asked Agnes.

"Indeed you may well ask; yes, I have fallen into the greatest of all good fortunes. Listen, Agnes, my sister; Dolly Bramwell has promised to marry me, and her father has consented." And he whirled her around the room again. As soon as she could get her breath she said:

"And you kept it from me all this time, Charlie!"

"There was nothing to tell until to-day, my dear sister, and now congratulations are in order."

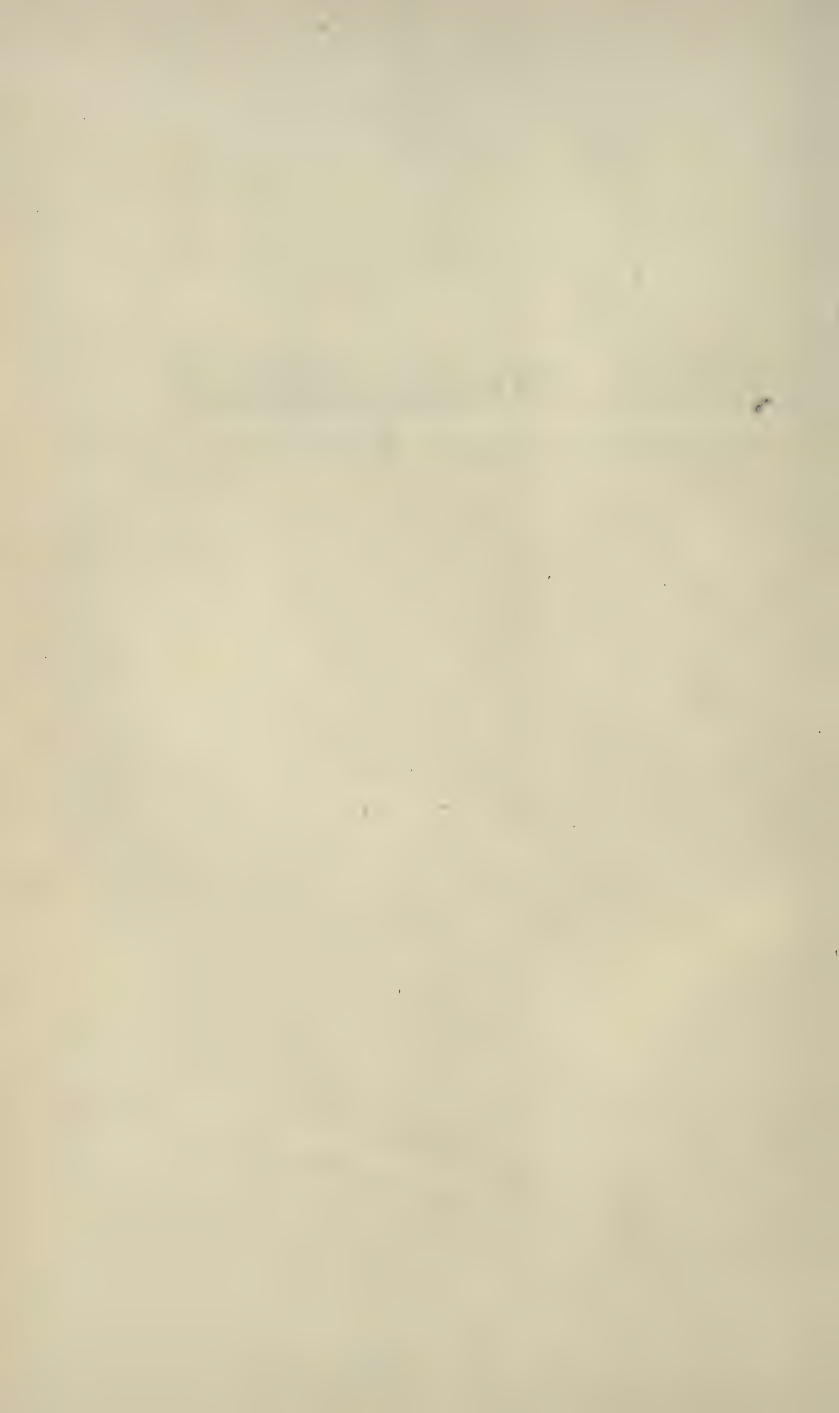
Thus did these two wise young people change their minds.

The End.



ESTHER WHEELWRIGHT

The Abenakis Captive; A True Story.



Early in the spring of 1703, just as the last traces of winter's snow had sunk into the earth, to be replaced by the no less white and feathery cherry-blossoms, there was consternation in the mansion of a wealthy English family residing in the environs of Boston. Little Esther was lost! The distracted father and servants searched the neighbouring forest, calling the beloved name, but alas! without success. After many days of fruitless effort to find some trace of his child, Mr. Wheelwright was obliged to yield to the general belief that his dear little Esther had been stolen by the Indians.

In company with other little European children, Esther had strayed a short distance into the woods, which were not far from the primitive school-house, and, tempted by the pretty spring blossoms, had wandered away from her companions. A savage Abenakis greedily watched the beautiful little pale-face from his hiding-place behind a clump of bushes. She was but six years of age, of exquisite beauty, with long, golden curls streaming about her shoulders and floating over her fair face. The Indian longed to have that lovely little girl to place in his wigwam beside his own dusky children. As little Esther stooped to gather some wild violets close to his hiding-place, the Abenakis, with one savage "hugh," clapped his hand over her mouth, and, seizing her

with the other, bore her off to the thickest of the forest, where he set down his trembling prize in the midst of his tribe. He adopted her as his own and handed her over to the care of his squaw.

Then commenced the wandering of our little English girl. With a child's faith in the power of her parents to do everything, she looked day by day for her father, who, she felt sure, would soon rescue her. Often she said to herself when suffering the hardships of her lot, "I will tell my papa, indeed I will," but alas! she was never more to see that loved father, nor feel the caresses of her fond mother; her brothers and sisters were replaced by tawny children of her savage captor, the refinements of civilized society by the wild ways of an Indian camp.

The family into which she was adopted loved their beautiful little captive; the squaw was always gentle with her, and she was treated by the whole tribe with marked respect. Her beauty and grace disarmed these savage people and filled their breasts with so great a reverence for her that her soul remained as pure and white as her countenance; her guardian angel never left her side, but watched carefully over this innocent flower.

Days lengthened into weeks, and months, and years. Little Esther's tattered school dress still clung to her, though she had out-grown it; her lovely tresses, darkened and plastered down with grease by her squaw mother, no longer clustered in ringlets around her head; her face burnt by sun and exposure, her hands and arms torn by brambles, her

little bare feet sore with many marches. Though still beautiful, she presented a sorry spectacle, and could her loving mother have seen her cherished little girl in this sad plight, how would her tender heart have been torn! Moreover, the gruff accents of the Abenakis dialect soon replaced the pretty prattle of her native tongue, and that language was forgotten in which her dear mother used to soothe her childish sorrows.

Compelled to follow the wanderings of the roaming tribe in their pursuit of game and constant change of camp, alas! how grievously was missed the tender care of her dear mother, the comforts of civilized life, the delicate food, the gentle surroundings to which she had been accustomed; to these succeeded the rough habits of her savage captors, and the coarse, repulsive food of the camp, while the scanty blanket and the bare ground replaced her snowy cot.

* * * *

About three years had passed since our English lily had been transplanted to the American forest, when a Jesuit missionary, Rev. P. Bigot, visiting the tribes, stopped one day at a certain village in the neighborhood of Quebec. Among the children who flocked around him he noticed the fair captive. His first thought was to rescue the poor child, and if possible, restore her to her parents. But the tribe would not consent; the Indian who had placed the sweet flower in his cabin would not part with her. Neither threats nor gifts would move him. The missionary caused the news of his discovery to be

carried to Boston. Mr. Wheelwright immediately applied to the Governor of New France, but several years elapsed before the release of the little captive could be effected, owing to the disturbed state of the colonies and the hostile attitude of the Indians.

In the meantime, the missionary did all he could for the flower he had discovered. The Indian dialect had replaced her mother tongue, and eagerly did little Esther drink in the good Father's instructions in this language. She learned to love God, and henceforth the forest was no longer dreary to her; all her young heart she poured out to her Father in heaven, and with absolute trust left in His hands, and to His own good time, all care for her release.

What must have been the feelings of her parents when they learned that their beloved child was living thus among a savage tribe of Indians! They had recourse again to the French Governor, and through the intermediary of Rev. Father Bigot, the little captive became the subject of serious negotiations between the Marquis of Vaudreuil and the Chief of the Abenakis. Even under such powerful influence it was with difficulty the release was effected, so great was the superstitious affection of the savages for their beautiful captive. At length their reluctance was overcome by valuable presents, and the little English girl was given up to the great French captain.

* * * *

In 1708 Rev. R. P. Bigot arrived in Quebec with his little protegee and presented her to the Marquis

of Vaudreuil, who, happy in having rescued from the barbarians so lovely a child, regarded her as his adopted daughter and took her to the Castle St. Louis, where the Marchioness welcomed her with maternal tenderness. The bark roof of the wigwam was changed for the Vice-Regal residence, and Esther, now eleven years of age, speedily won all hearts by the gentleness of her character and her amiable manner.

She was still seven hundred miles from her home; the intervening country was filled with hostile savages, making it impossible to convey the young English girl to her own people, therefore the Marquis treated her as his own child and provided for her education by placing her with his eldest daughter under the care and training of the Ursuline Mothers. On the 18th of January, 1709, she was placed as boarder in the Ursuline Convent.

Shortly after her admission to this Convent Esther made her First Communion in sentiments of most fervent piety and gratitude to God, who in His great goodness had chosen her and had taken such extraordinary measures to bring her into the household of the Faith. He had caused her to be removed from parents who, while they were tender and loving to their children, of irreproachable conduct, of refined manners, of high social standing and wealth, were yet outside the pale of the One True Fold. He had brought her out of the land where the Faith was almost unknown, or practised with difficulty. He had protected her during her captivity, for while externally she was surrounded with all the coarseness of

savage life, her soul was preserved in spotless purity. Finally, He had caused her to be rescued by Catholic missionaries and brought to a Catholic country at a period when it was impossible for her to be restored to her own people. He had given her for adopted father the Governor of this country, and had permitted her to be placed for instruction among His own spouses.

For all this she had thanked God when He descended for the first time into her pure young heart.

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Towards the end of her last year at the Convent Miss Wheelwright disclosed to her guardian, the Marquis of Vaudreuil, her desire to remain with the Ursulines and share their life. Naturally the Governor, who felt himself obliged to restore her to her parents, refused his consent, and she returned with his daughter to the Castle St. Louis.

Of beautiful exterior and winning manner, she was loved by all who came in contact with her, and one of weaker character might easily have been spoiled by the attention which was lavished upon her. But she had tasted of the peaceful joy of the cloister, and the social gaiety of the world in which she now moved, as a resident of the Governor's Castle, had no charm for her; she longed to return to the Convent, to be a spouse of Christ.

Meanwhile the Governor sought an opportunity to restore the young girl to her family, and with this intention took her to Three Rivers, where he allowed her to remain with the Ursulines of that city during

his stay. He then took her with the same object to Montreal, placing her for a time with the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu, but her heart always turned to the spot where for the first time her soul had been nourished with the Eucharistic Bread and she ever prayed to return to her Ursuline Mothers of Quebec. At length, unsuccessful in all his attempts to restore Esther to her parents on account of the continued hostilities of the two countries, the Governor returned to Quebec and consented to the young maiden's entrance at the Convent.

The Ursulines, considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, the protracted warfare between the two countries, and consequent impossibility of the young girl returning to her family, also the possible changes which in so many years might have taken place in that family, consented to receive the ardent aspirant into the Novitiate. The 2nd of October, 1712, witnessed her joyful admission.

Who can describe the ardor of this great and generous soul who at the age of fifteen turned her back upon the world and all it holds precious, who renounced the hope of ever returning to her country and her family, who was filled with but one thought, to preserve the priceless treasure of her faith and save her soul?

Three months later she received the habit and white veil, under the name of Mother Mary Joseph of the Infant Jesus. On this occasion the preacher of the day was the Rev. R. P. Bigot, to whose zeal the young novice was indebted for her first instruction in the Faith, her deliverance from captivity, and

in great measure, her religious vocation. The day on which his dear protegee was enrolled under the standard of St. Ursula was for the noble missionary a day of unspeakable happiness. In the course of his eloquent address he reminded the novice that so long as she was a minor no opportunity of returning to her country had presented itself, that now she was of age her parents could not object to her choice of a vocation, or would not disapprove when they should understand its excellence and sanctity.

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During the following year a treaty of peace between England and France was effected, restoring the colonies to comparative security, and the Ursulines were in daily expectation of receiving news from Miss Wheelwright's family. She had received the white veil, and was in the second year of her novitiate when pressing letters came from them urging their beloved Esther to return. Her tender heart rejoiced to receive news of her parents, and she was greatly moved at seeing the signatures of her father and mother, though she was unable to read their letters, having completely lost all knowledge of the English language; her heart, however, remained faithful to her engagement with God; her resolution to consecrate herself to Him in religion was not for a moment shaken; on the contrary, fearing her family would make still stronger efforts to withdraw her from the Convent, she besought the Bishop, Mgr. de St. Vallier, to hasten the moment of her profession, to shorten the term of her noviceship, that

she might be secure of her happiness. She addressed the same petition to the Marquis of Vaudreuil, whom she venerated and loved as a father. These eminent persons, holding the opinion that under the circumstances the nuns should make an exception to the Constitution of the Order, the question was taken into consideration in the Monastery, and after due deliberation the Council decided that as the novice was, according to the French law, of age, and had moreover lost the use of the language of her native land, also that as in New England she would not have an opportunity of practising her religion, exception ought to be made in her favor; accordingly the Ursuline Mothers consented to admit her to pronounce her vows. Thus the usual probation was shortened by nine months, and is the only exception of the kind recorded in the annals of the Ursulines of Quebec.

The happy novice, therefore, attained her most ardent desire, and in presence of all the distinguished persons the city contained, and under the episcopal blessing, she placed the final seal upon her holy engagements.

Immediately after the profession of Miss Wheelwright word was sent to her family, who instead of being displeased at the step the young lady had taken, despatched a courier from Boston with letters and presents. Among other things was sent a beautiful portrait of her mother. We can imagine the tender tears the young nun shed over the likeness of a mother whom she could scarcely remember, and whose features were entirely unfamiliar to her; how

she would gaze upon it and strive to discern some traits she could recognize of the mother of her dreams. This portrait is still preserved in the Monastery.

Mrs. Wheelwright never could undertake the journey to Quebec, but she appeared to be quite consoled by the abundant proof she received of her daughter's happiness in the Monastery.

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At the beginning of the year 1754, fifty-one years after little Esther Wheelwright had been stolen by the savage Abenakis, she saw for the first time a member of her own family. Her nephew, a young Mr. Wheelwright, journeyed from Boston on purpose to visit his aunt. The Bishop granted permission to the young gentleman to enter the cloister on this occasion. With what varied feelings must the good Mother have regarded her relative, the first she had seen since she was six years of age! Whether the young English gentleman could converse in French is not known; certainly he found his aunt French in every respect, save her birth. In taking leave of his aunt, Mr. Wheelwright presented her, in the name of the family with a silver cover and a silver goblet bearing the family arms.

This family appear to have had noble and generous minds. Notwithstanding the difference of religion, they never failed to profit of every opportunity to send loving messages and handsome presents to their Ursuline relative. At the time the book was published from which the writer makes these extracts

(1864), it was reported that a grand-niece of Mother of the Infant Jesus was still living in Boston; and at this day many American visitors to Quebec claim relationship with the interesting captive.

It was a remarkable coincidence that the first time a Superioress of English birth was elected at the Ursuline Convent should have been just as English rule was being inaugurated in Canada. In 1760 Mother Wheelwright, of the Infant Jesus, was elected to that office. Although, as noticed before, she had entirely lost the use of her native tongue, still the fact that this daughter of England owed so much to French hospitality would seem to show that the two races could harmonize and blend in charity, at least in the religious world.

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On the 12th of April, 1764, this venerable Mother renewed her vows of fifty years of religious profession. The ceremony was carried out with great solemnity and rejoicing in the old Monastery, notwithstanding the still unsettled condition of the country.

And so passed away the sixty-six years of religious life of this holy nun, years spent peacefully in the service of God. Many had been the changes during these turbulent times in the outside world. The Convent, too, had suffered many hardships during the sad wars, but peace had always reigned in the hearts of Christ's spouses. Mother Wheelwright, of the Infant Jesus, had borne her share of the burdens and duties of the Monastery. Teaching the

young girls who all loved her gentle rule, working embroidery for the support of the cloistered family, and when her eyes became too dim for the delicate, exacting work, we find her employed in caring for the linen, mending, etc. She filled all the important offices in the Convent in turn—Superior, Assistant, Zelatrice, and Mistress of Novices.

The young girl who in 1712 won the love of all in the Castle of St. Louis by her grace and amiability, we find in 1780 the joy and edification of the Monastery by the exalted virtue she has added to her natural graces.

With sorrow the Ursuline nuns saw the end approach for their dearly-loved Mother, who at the age of eighty-four years, was called upon to lay down her cross and enter into the reward of all her sacrifices. We shall quote from the "Glimpses of the Monastery":

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"It was on the 20th of October, 1780, amid her usual aspirations towards Heaven, that our beloved Mother Wheelwright, of the Infant Jesus, ceased to live in this world, to live forever with the Blessed in Heaven, leaving us the legacy of her virtues to imitate, and a memory that will be ever fresh in our grateful hearts. Her ancestors were of distinguished birth, as the arms of her family bear witness, but she needed not the illustration of birth or title to win from all who knew her a willing tribute of love and admiration.

"Mother Esther Wheelwright, of the Infant Jesus, is one of those ancient nuns whose names are never

pronounced but with love and veneration in the community which she edified and served during sixty-six years."

The writer of this paper, herself a pupil of the Ursulines of Quebec, is indebted to "L' Histoire du Monastere" and the "Glimpses of the Monastery" for the facts of this remarkable history.

The End.





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Hoskin, Mary, 1851?-1928.
The little green glove and
other stories

